A social history of the northern central region of South Australia: 1950 to 1979

By Gordon Briscoe
Declarations

In compiling this thesis I have sought the advice and aid of many Institutions, organisations and individual people who have been acknowledged below. Except were I have indicated, however, the work involved in the research and textual compilation of this Master of Arts (MA) thesis have been my own work.

Gordon Briscoe
History Dept Faculty of Arts, November, 1991.
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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

The setting for this social history is an area stretching from the vast ancient plains of the Great Victoria Desert eastwards to the old Port Augusta - Alice Springs railway line in South Australia (see Map 1 below). This is an area of land which was inhabited by a number of disparate traditional and customary Aboriginal groups, who as a result of

Plate 1

photo of Aborigines and train at Ooldea
Map 1

Map of study region: northern central region of South Australia

1. This term 'customary' is used here to mean the way in which groups developed new customs and living arrangements in particular at railway sidings, on missions and on pastoral leases.
pastoral and transportation developments began to migrate from their traditional habitat into a new modern Australian society based upon rational bureaucratic structures. In 1950, which is when the period of study begins, large numbers of non-Aborigines were continuing to migrate into the area while Aborigines began moving into the urban industrial areas on the periphery of the region of study. At the beginning of the period of study Thomas Playford (later Sir Thomas) was Premier of South Australia and his political support extended to the pastoralists of the region of study. This political support enabled pastoralists to dominate the region not only in an economic and political sense but also in a social and cultural sense. The post-war economic boom, the transport revolution, the isolation and alienation of small communities and the gradual transformation of Aboriginal consciousness all had their roots in the forms of power exercised by pastoralists. In 1965 Playford’s conservative government was replaced by the Walsh Labor government and with it came a wide-ranging period of reforms which lasted until Premier Don Dunstan retired in 1979.

1.2. Statement of thesis

This thesis endeavours to explain a number of events which took place in the northern central region of South Australia from 1950 to 1979. Through the use of oral and ethnographic source material, the thesis aims to bring out more clearly the presence of Aborigines in history. The starting point is an analysis of a series of events from the turn of the century culminating in the emergence of a fringe-camp culture which helped to transform Aboriginal consciousness during the period 1950 to 1979.

From the turn of the century Aboriginal groups were migrating from their desert habitat and were setting up, more-or-less, permanent fringe-camps on pastoral properties in many areas of the northern central region. The prosperity of the post-war economic boom perpetuated the pastoralists’ dominance, which was the central factor in inflating the poverty and chaos experienced by the Aboriginal rural labourforce to the mid-1960s. As both mining and Aboriginal interests took on a greater importance, the pastoralists were forced to share not only the revenue earning capacity of the region and their political power but also the land. Finally, out of the economic developments of the 1950s and 1960s emerged new social relations which, by Dunstan’s retirement, underpinned the new political relationships. These new relationships involved pastoral, mining, Aboriginal and the state and federal governments’ interests, all of whom played a part in the transformation of Aboriginal consciousness.
Before discussing how these key processes are arranged within the general structure of the thesis, some explanation is required of the meaning of social history, of aspects of historiography relating to source material and research methodology and, finally, of the underlying theory used in the thesis.

1.3. Social history defined

The study of modern history is the study, among other things, of causes of events in the context of a time-frame. Modern social history goes beyond the type of social history which was a reaction to political history. The idea that social history was ‘a history with the politics left out’ has been further modified. American sociologists after the First World War wanted to avoid the type of Marxist interpretation formulated by economic historians. The use of sociology was seen by American scholars as a theoretical tool to achieve that end. Contemporary social history, therefore, may be understood as an extension of modern history, but one endowed with greater complexity. As Burke notes,

There are a number of definitions of social history which are more positive than ‘history with the politics left out’. It might be defined as the history of social relationships; the history of social structure; the history of every-day life; the history of private life; the history of social solidarities and social conflicts; the history of social classes; the history of social groups ‘seen both as separate and as mutually dependent units’.

The assumption here, as suggested below, is that Marxism remains an important aspect of historiography. Before taking up that aspect, however, the discussion focuses upon the research methodology of this thesis.

1.4. Source material and research methodology

1.4.1. Oral evidence

The question of using oral evidence as a tool for writing history is a complex one, and needs to be clarified because of the relevance of the question to this thesis. The thesis originally aimed to make use of oral source material, and some was collected, but the amount gathered was insufficient to answer all the questions raised in the narrative. Two problems are mentioned. The first relates to the writing of Aborigines into history through the selective use of ethnographic and oral sources. The second is to answer the question, 'Is there a special and separate history for Aborigines and another for other Australians?' The answer to the first problem lies in an appreciation of the way the historian uses perspectives of the past, the availability of oral evidence, the reliability of ethnographic and oral evidence and, finally, whether Aborigines enter history by choice or design.

1.4.2. Historiography and Aboriginal history

One of the answers to the first problem lies in the origin and definitions of history as a discipline which has been developed by European cultures as a means of reconstructing the past in written and pictorial forms. History is a European cultural means of talking, writing and thinking about the past. Aboriginal people living within Australian society operate within that European historical constraint. That is not to admit that Aboriginal people have no past, because all cultures possess their own pasts. What it does admit is that Aboriginal people enter history under certain circumstances, but this entry into history need not necessarily occur if either the people concerned do not want to do so or the historian decides not to include them. Alternatively, if people want to be included in history, then there are ways that this can be achieved. The fact that Aborigines have been excluded from Australian history is partially a historiographical problem which can be overcome by the use of ethnographic material and by the use of oral source material. The method of using both oral and ethnographic source

2. Ibid., p. 2.
materials does have problems that are not well understood - which brings us to the second question, 'Is there a separate history for Aborigines and another for other Australians?'

1.4.3. Aborigines in Australian history

Firstly, in the same way as the working classes were largely left out of the European historical narrative of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so it is that Aborigines have been left out of Australian history. That is, historiography had not been sufficiently advanced to include them, or other peoples without writing, or written sources, as a basis for reconstructing their pasts. In part this has been due to the recording of colonial source material. In part also, it has been due to resistance by Aborigines in not wanting to be included in the way Europeans have talked and written about the past. Aborigines, therefore, have chosen to retain the past in all sorts of different ways which were, and still are, quite alien to Europeans. Where Aborigines have entered history they have been included only as very shadowy figures. More recently, however, the Aborigines' past has increasingly been included in Australian history. On the one hand, this phenomenon is an assimilating process in which Australian history is used, as anthropology has been used, as a 'hand-maiden' of imperialism. On the other hand, if modern Aboriginal groups wish to be included in Australian history, as it appears they may do, then this could be a statement that those groups may want to be assimilated into Australian society. But any decision must be an informed one rather than a decision based on ignorance of the processes involved. That is, Aboriginal people need to ask themselves whether colonialism has ended and history has begun.

Secondly, oral source material is relevant if the material is accessible and available for verification by other scholars. For the most part, however, Australian ethnography has been accessible and available for verification by other scholars.


1. Ibid., p.71-72. For an account of the problems of Australian historiography see H. Reynolds, The Other Side of The Frontier, James Cook University, Qld., 1981.

collected by anthropologists and as a result the Aboriginal past - to about 1970 - has been largely written either by ethnographers using their own sources which have been unavailable to other scholars, or the history of Aborigines has been written from ethnographic sources. In addition, these ethnographic sources have been beyond the capacity of the people concerned to criticise. The alleged definitiveness of this approach to explaining and describing the past is problematic because there is no such thing as definitive history. Historical ideas are continually being added to or subtracted from the current view of what happened in the past. In short, history is an evaluative and self-critical process which is continually under review. In addition, oral source material can be relevant if, as it does with documentary source material, it is able to answer the kinds of questions asked by the historian reconstructing a particular event from the past.

Thirdly, the collection of oral source material is not peculiar to historical research, but is a method which has been used by writers and journalists for some time. Its relevance to historians is in the way in which oral evidence can help to reconstruct the past for people who have no written way of recording it. Now this question relates as much to the 'lower' classes as it does to Aborigines. People without written traditions reconstruct their past either as stories based on what can be memorised and not on facts emerging from written sources, or they have alternative ways of recollecting the events of the past through dance, forms of oral representation and forms of pictorial symbolism.

Finally, it must be remembered that the past is the past and is not necessarily history. History is a concept which helps to explain human activity in the past. Alternatively, some Aborigines in the region of study explained the past in anthropological ways. That is, as will become clearer later, these Aborigines assume that Aboriginal society is structured and actually functions in the way that anthropologists claim that it does. That perspective will not be elaborated upon here, however, ethnographers recorded what they saw or what they believed were the beliefs of Aboriginal traditional peoples. In many cases some of the ethnographic writings are the only forms of source material that have survived. This is particularly true of fringe society which was the product of an asymptotic process which took place as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples struggled to cope

with the chaos of their changing, or sometimes unchanging, circumstances. The predicament that confronted these groups were highly influential on moulding what they did and how they did it, but, as I will argue, for the most part were made by people from outside the region.

1.4.4. Research methodology

The relevant ethnographic material for this thesis was researched at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra. Field research involved extensive travel to the Great Victoria Desert, Cook, Ceduna, Port Augusta, Quorn, Oodnadatta, Marree, Coober Pedy, Leigh Creek and Nepabunna. In addition, private papers not available in archival venues were used, especially in relation to Ernabella. Although access to the Lutheran Archives in north Adelaide was available, I made no use of the material from Yalata because of the availability of similar material contained in published South Australian Government reports and other secondary sources.

The collection and cataloguing of oral evidence used in this thesis was arranged through the Australian National Library. All interviews were taped and are available on request. In most cases interviews were arranged well in advance and most appointments were kept. It was not possible to keep all appointments due to flooding because of heavy rains which blocked the roads and costs of travel to areas such as Anna Creek, Macumba and Oodnadatta. All taped interviews have been catalogued for access under the Australian National Library tape recording system and the series numbers have all been included in the bibliography.

Gathering source material involved archival and field research. The archival research entailed extensive examination of original company annual reports and other documentary source material held in the Archives of Business and Labour at the Australian National University. Private papers were sighted and used where necessary, as were some personal diaries held in the Mortlock Library, the Adelaide University and the South Australian Museum.

1.5. Clarification of the use of theory

The following discussion clarifies some theoretical and historiographic concepts which are of relevance to the compilation and understanding of this thesis. First, some sociological terms are discussed; second, a series of Marxian terms are clarified prior to their use in the main narrative.
Part of the theory underlying this thesis is a modernisation theory which depicts traditional Aborigines of the Great Victoria Desert migrating from their desert habitat, and into a modern Australian society. This process, in sociological terms, is characterised by a shift from 'Gemeinschaft' (the face-to-face community relations of a traditional society) to 'Gesellschaft' (the impersonal society and patterns of life typical of large-scale societies after modernisation). These concepts, however, need to be coupled with the concepts of 'erklären' (which means '...the sciences which seek to explain...[phenomena] from outside...') and 'verstehen' ('...which aims to understand...[phenomena] from within...').

One of the first theorists to use modernisation theory was Tonnies, a nineteenth century sociologist, who used the concepts to denote the social transformation of a community. It will be shown that Aborigines changed from a traditional mode of living to one which aided the process of them entering modern society. This social change was driven from outside the cultural setting in which Aborigines intentionally or unintentionally found themselves. Also the economic, political and cultural strength of European society made an impact on the new social relations which emerged from fringe-camp culture. Such social forces unwittingly gave rise to creative social, economic political and cultural adaptations. The federal government was, nevertheless, the real external generator of change. This story is not exclusively about Aborigines, who made up only a small part of the population, but involves other sections of the economic, political, social and cultural life of the region.

At the same time as Aboriginal groups were modernising, the society which they were entering was also in the process of transformation. The new circumstances were influenced by the impact of a number of factors: a deliberate decision made by Aborigines to alter their traditional patterns of migration; an attempt by the pastoralists to consolidate their economic, political, social and cultural dominance maintained by favourable

2. Burke, 'Sociology and History', op.cit., pp.82.
3. Ibid., pp.18.
post-Second World War economic conditions; moves by the British and Australian governments to secure the Long Range Weapons Establishment area from entry by the public; mining developments; and the transport revolution. The other influences were the impact of the state government's programs, Christian ideology and, finally, federal government social welfare policies from the 1967 referendum to the end of the Dunstan reform period.

Two further important concepts, which are related to modernisation, are to be used in reconstructing the past in the region of study. 'Alienation' and 'consciousness' are concepts derived from Marxian historiography, although they are widely used by non-Marxists, they are inter-linked with each other. Alienation, for Marx, formed the basis from which people became estranged from themselves and the things which they made or produced. People's consciousness of their objective circumstances was disrupted by the exploitation of some groups by others which forced them to live with a false view of the world around them. This false view Marx described as ideology, and was the basis of false-consciousness. False-consciousness affected the way people related to one another. As the phenomenon of 'fringe-camp' cultures emerging from places such as Ceduna, Marree and Oodnadatta are explained, it will become clearer that fringe-camp 'ideology' is socially defined. Ideology, it will later be demonstrated, was manifested socially in Aboriginal people's cultural and economic lives which Marx described as 'social relations'. These terms require a little more elaboration.

As a process, 'alienation' is relevant to this thesis in two ways. On the one hand, alienation helps to explain the impact of modernism on things such as consciousness, as well as influencing social relations. On the other hand, alienation embodies properties such as isolation which affect institutionalised communities (as discussed in more detail in chapter 4). Alienation was a concept forming the basis of much of what Marx discusses in his numerous theories of society and history, but it is not intended to go beyond the ideas outlined above. One final point is that alienation and ideology are closely related since, as Marx indicated, ideology is '...ultimately nothing but alienated consciousness....'

The Marxian notion of 'consciousness' may be understood as the production of ideas. It commences as a part of what people think and do when creating their material subsistence or, put another way, in relation to social and cultural activities linked with the economy. As Marx indicated, consciousness was ‘...the real language of life....’

Furthermore, as Lichtman has shown, Marx emphasised his own understanding of the way social institutions added to the 'mystification' of consciousness through their creation of ideological perspectives of the world. Marx indicated that people were able to perceive the world differently in their imagination and then ‘...erect it in reality....’, or through a process of 'consciousness' they had the power of objectifying knowledge.

To simplify a complex discussion, Marx links 'consciousness' and 'alienation', and further argued that, as an essential part of human nature, people’s consciousness can be estranged from themselves. That is, the thinking process can be alienated from the production process - in a concrete way:

where the 'head' and the 'hand' of the social organism altogether 'part company'...and 'become deadly foes'.

Finally, the concept of 'social relations' is to be understood as referring to:

the social relationships found in production, i.e., the nature of the economic roles permitted by the state of development of the forces of production...[that is the technological know-how, types of equipment and the types of goods produced] and, further, relationships that exist between these roles.

Clearly these ideas are closely related to a larger theory in which Marx elaborated upon aspects of nineteenth century capitalism, which, while part of modernisation, is not a specific theme of this thesis. Marxian historiography will be used

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selectively to compliment other theoretical ideas, some of them Weberian, which are applied to processes that occurred in the region of study.

1.6. Structure of thesis

The peoples on whom this thesis focuses were divided in a number of important ways. The most obvious of the many differences among these Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups were their racial, cultural, economic and political divisions. Other important differences relate to population, location and size, and status before the law.

This thesis explains, through the use of a social history model, how a number of events contributed, in a dialectical way, to changes in an area called the northern central region of South Australia. The use of the term 'dialectical' refers to the existence of a complex set of opposing social forces. The explanation of these complex forces proceeds chronologically.

Chapter one discusses the theoretical assumptions guiding this study. An explanation is provided both of the meaning of the terms used and the way these will be applied. The methodology has already been elaborated upon because of problems associated with historic evidence, and because a shift in emphasis was required due to the over-optimistic goal of basing the whole thesis upon oral evidence.

Chapter two discusses ethnographic evidence about Aboriginal life at the turn of the century before discussing contemporary demographic patterns of the region. After locating the cause of the shift from customary migration routes to contemporary migration patterns, the analysis moves to demographic issues. New population source materials demonstrate Aboriginal demographic patterns and indicate a migration away from old habitats to new locations. Problems associated with the Australian census and the exclusion of Aborigines from the census before and after 1967 are discussed. The Australian Constitution caused various problems. The effects of the constitutional problems emerged over time as social and legal questions arose over whether state or federal authorities had concurrent, special or separate responsibilities for Aboriginal populations. As the problems

Cattle, sheep and grain growing areas in the region of study

mounted, Aborigines were moving, at an increasing rate, into camp-dwelling habitats, and establishing closer social relationships with white pastoral, mission and town residents. In turn, the new customary camp practices caused the health problems which are portrayed by the epidemiological evidence presented below, and with which Aborigines were faced. Significant here are the communicable diseases fostered by camp life. These will be presented in the form of graphs.

The transformation of pastoral economic, political, social and cultural dominance is the subject of chapter three. The analysis begins with a discussion of the pastoral industry in the 1940s, followed by a background description of pastoralism and its political leadership in the region after 1950 (see Map 2 on above pastoral areas). The pastoral industry drew benefits from the presence in the region of the Long Range Weapons Establishment at both Woomera and Maralinga (see Map 3 on page 15 below for location of weapons project). At the same time it created migration problems for Aborigines and promoted their east- and southward movement. In addition, pastoral dominance was aided by the pastoralists’ revenue-earning capacity, increases in rural production in general, and generous land leasing arrangements from the state government. All of these developments occurred against the background of a prosperous period in the cattle, sheep and grain industries from 1950 to the mid-1960s. Finally, conditions of labour are investigated to determine whether or not the prosperity enjoyed by the landowning pastoralists was in any way passed on to pastoral labour and their families.

Chapter four investigates the similarities between the alienation experienced by ‘urban-based industrial workers’ and that of people living on isolated Aboriginal cattle stations, missions, small mining towns such as Coober Pedy and, finally, railway towns such as Cook and Marree (see Map 4 on page 16 below for reference to isolated towns and communities). Previous studies have uncovered alienating qualities of industrial towns and, despite the paucity of secondary source material and the limited evidence presented, similar properties will be seen to exist in small towns and communities of the region. In addition, this chapter demonstrates how the mining industry (that is the non-traditional, modern industry) gradually generated a revenue-earning capacity and gained for its managers and owners a share of the political, economic, cultural and social dominance possessed by the pastoral industry. The chapter also demonstrates how, during the 1960s, Aboriginal people moved into the towns to earn a living in one way or another.
Map 3

Map showing weapons research 'prohibited area' and location of Aboriginal communities and selected railway towns

Source: Val Lyons ANU from data provided from Royal Commission into British Testing in Australia, 1985.
Map 4

Location map of mining, railway and Aboriginal reserve land

Changes in the transportation industry mirrored the shifts in the pastoralists’ dominance over other groups: as the pastoralists were able to achieve and maintain power within the government of South Australia, so they were able to gain cheap rail prices to transport their produce to market in Adelaide (see Map 5 below which indicated the old rail routes and the new ones). Chapter five briefly describes the building of the early rail route from Port Augusta to Alice Springs through the Flinders Ranges and via Oodnadatta (see Map 5.1. below). When the route was shifted to the west (see Map 5.2. below), it amounted to a subsidy provided by the state government to mining and Aboriginal groups in or near the North West Aboriginal Reserve. Moreover, the growing influence of these two interest groups in the region from the 1950s onwards meant that the federal government’s role as an employer and developer in the region grew. Similarly, as federal influence developed in race relations, so the interests of Aborigines became increasingly important. Chapter five, therefore, highlights the way in which the railway system both encouraged the dominance of pastoralists’ relations over other groups and maintained them by providing subsidies for travel and haulage.

Chapter six considers the growth and decline of the dominance by pastoralists over the social relationships of the various groups in the region which resulted, among other things, in the continued movement of Aborigines, from about 1900 to 1979, into the urban areas located on the periphery of the region of study. In the early 1960s the decline of the pastoralists’ economic, political and cultural dominance began to give ground in the face of the rising status and power of other groups, in particular mining and Aboriginal interests. The decline in pastoral influence was commensurate with the growth and development of the mining industries in the late-1960s and 1970s. The changes in the pastoral and mining industries gave rise to certain occurrences impacting upon the Aboriginal population, which was itself undergoing change. The race relations policies of the Playford government reflected the absence of Aboriginal political consciousness in 1950. Playford’s conservative government fostered the contradictory policies of ‘protection’ and ‘integration’. By the late-1950s such race policies were being questioned. Playford’s failure to cope adequately with the Stuart affair opened the way for the Dunstan government to weld philosophies of liberal ‘rights’ with Fabian socialist philosophical perspectives on social welfare and land reform for Aborigines. Using the north western communities as an example (see Map 6 on page 20 below), chapter six describes and explains
Map 5 (which includes Maps 5.1. and Map 5.2).

Location map of changes in rail routes: 1950 to 1979

Map 5.1. showing the railway routes in the region of study by 1950.

Map 5.2, showing the new rail linkage from Port Augusta to Leigh Creek and to Alice Springs via Tarcoola.

Sources: Redrawn by Val Lyons
ANU, from Railway Reports 1955-79.
Map 6

Map of Ernabella, Fregon, Amata and outstations

how the emergence of Aboriginal political consciousness was achieved during the period of transition from the Playford era of the 1950s to the Dunstan reform era of the 1970s.

Chapter seven draws together the different themes explored chronologically in the thesis and synthesizes the conclusion of the various themes.

The transformation from pastoral dominance of the 1950s in the region of study to new social relations that developed to 1979 cannot be fully appreciated without highlighting what was a monumental turning point in the lives of not only the original inhabitants and their descendants of the Great Victoria Desert but also the pastoralists, railway workers, mining industry, service towns the South Australian and federal governments. What was it that made them historical actors rather than simply passive observers of the processes profoundly affecting their lives? The first step on understanding the important part played by Aborigines as historical actors is to investigate their emigration from their desert habitats from about 1990 to the end of the Dunstan reform period in 1979.
Chapter 2

Demography of the Region: 1900 to 1979

This chapter aims to examine the migration of Aborigines away from their traditional habitats, and the effects of this on them and others who lived in the region. The process of migration began before the turn of the century, continued through Sir Thomas Playford's Premiership, and accelerated in the 1960s.

Population trends in the north central region were influenced by forces from outside the region and by economic changes and changing value systems of both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal groups of the region. This chapter analyses and evaluates the impact of internal migration within the region and compares the resulting regional variations with those in the total population of South Australia. The study of the social aspects of demography is the study of human population processes and characteristics in which the data is quantitatively compiled from vital statistics. In this chapter, however, demography (which is taken to mean that branch of anthropology which deals with the life-conditions of communities of people as shown by statistics of birth, deaths and diseases) is used to define population processes and characteristics. The study is important for two reasons.

Firstly, by studying the social patterns of peoples' economic, political, cultural and social life an assessment may be made of the chaos in which many people found themselves. Secondly, demography can shed some light on the health profiles of people forced into changing their lifestyles. The demographic background focuses on broader population patterns, and demonstrates the strength of the decisions made by Aboriginal groups to adapt to changes in their customary migration routes to new forms of transportation during the period from 1900 to 1979. New figures are presented on the growth and migration patterns of the total regional population. Some recent health trends associated with changes in Aboriginal living patterns are provided. Changes in the regional population figures for non-Aborigines will be compared with those for the Aboriginal population of the region for the period 1950-79.

2.1. Broad demographic patterns including growth and migration of the population

In studies of Aborigines in South Australia carried out by anthropologists in the 1920s and 1930s, demographic analysis

Map 7

Map showing population density for South Australia 1976

appears to have had a low priority when compared with studies of customs, kinship structures and apparent religious practices. One reason for emphasising other than demographic questions was that the desert region was only just being crossed by European pioneers. It was equally difficult to understand too, that the traditional migratory patterns (see Map 8.1 on page 25 below) used prior to pastoral development were being profoundly altered in that the desert routes were being replaced by road and rail routes. There were a number of reasons for the omission of proper demographic evaluations by ethnographers. From 1900 to 1950 demographic characterization based upon racial differences was complicated by additional divisions along economic, political and geographical lines.

The racial divisions were arranged in two ways. In one way, non-Aborigines occupied the fertile coastal and well-watered northern central part of the region. The new landowners employed the descendants of the original traditional Aboriginal groups as


1. A.A. Yengoyan, 'Biological And Demographic Components In Aboriginal Australian Socio-Economic Organisation', in Oceania, Vol., XLIII, No, 2, December, 1972, pp. 85-95. Yengoyan, however, makes an assumption that, '... demographic analysis is difficult due to the poor quality of collected data...', but, he fails to explain the reasons for that difficulty.

pastoral labour, in one form or another. In another way the desert groups were not totally abandoning their 'traditional' lifestyle. On the one hand, pastoralists were reluctant to provide any amenities for their hired labour and were even less inclined to do so for Aboriginal labour because of their migratory habits. On the other hand, Aboriginal workers would not

Map 8

Map 8.1. showing traditional Aboriginal migratory routes

Map 8.2. showing Berndt's desert groups

always use facilities on properties even if they were provided or not. One important area of Aborigines' changing customs, however, was their northerly migration routes. The changes were probably occurring by 1900 and definitely by the late-1940s. These bush, and occasional pastoral, workers remained essentially on the edges of the desert region, however. In addition to retaining some aspects of their food gathering skills, their customary way of interpreting the world around them lingered through in their social relationships.

The economic divisions were more obvious. In the first place, until the Second World War, the people of mixed racial descent were, more or less, confined to government reserves, cattle properties, church missions and camps on the outskirts of service towns like Marree. In the southern area people were confined to such places as Koonibba Lutheran Mission, some thirty kilometres west of Ceduna. These Aborigines were labourers who serviced the wheat and sheep properties of the Gawler Ranges. When seasonal work was completed, they returned to Koonibba. In the northern and eastern parts of the region refuge was sought at either Ernabella (from 1935 onwards) or Finniss Springs near Marree and Nepabunna in the Flinders Ranges. In the second place, to guarantee their subsistence, Aboriginal people of full-descent who made the move from more northerly desert areas remained close to the railway sidings of Ooldea, Wynbring, Tarcoola, Port Augusta and north to the Northern Territory border. They stayed close to the railway line in order to travel to their places of employment or to trade their artifacts to passing rail passengers.

1. R.M. Berndt, 'Tribal Migrations And Myths Centring On Ooldea South Australia' Oceania, Vol., XII, No., 1, September, 1941, pp.2-20. Although mythology is a way of thinking whereby people may recall the past, some contemporary anthropologists consider this to be 'ideological'. While it can be argued that the Aboriginal past can become ideological, it was not the case in the 1920s and 30s when R.M. and C.H. Berndt were studying the Ooldea people. See John Bern, 'Ideology And Domination: Toward A Reconstruction Of Australian Aboriginal Social Formation', in Oceania, Vol., L., No., 2, December, 1979, pp.118-131. This article has profoundly influenced modern anthropology and anthropologists' reconstruction of contemporary Aboriginal society. In my view there has been a misrepresentation of the use of the term 'ideology': see Talal Asad, 'Are There Histories of Peoples Without Europe? A Review Article', in Comparative Studies In Society And History, Vol.29., No., 3, July, 1987, pp.594-607. See also, Talal Asad, 'Anthropology and the analysis of ideology', in Man, Vol., 14, No., 4, December, 1979, pp.607-628.
The political manifestation of the newly emerging population distribution was the Aborigines Act 1911 (as amended 1939), which, under section 7 of the 1939 amendments, provided for an Aborigines Protection Board. The Aborigines protection legislation not only meant that the churches could manage leased land but also that special reserved land areas were set aside for use by Aborigines. In addition, protectors could move people to other locations such as institutions and missions. In the north central region the missions provided the main institutions for the operation of 'native protection policies' (more will be said about protection legislation later). Demographic influences were affected in the way the legislation controlled both the old and new customs and manners of traditional peoples. In addition, new traditions of labour relations were being formed between pastoralists and 'their' Aboriginal labour. Social control meant that the people defined as Aborigines could be controlled in many more ways than the rest of the population. For example, it

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3. See section, 7 sub-sections, 4(a) to 4(k), Ibid., pp.50-52.

4. For an interesting perspective of a 1960s view of the problems caused by social control legislation in South Australia, see: Don. Dunstan, 'Aboriginal Land Title And Employment In South
was not uncommon for bush workers to have their children cared for by leaving them at the various mission establishments in, or outside, the region. In other cases the police (who were normally protectors) would place the children in the care of missions. These were strategically located near regions needing large numbers of casual labourers (see Maps 9.1 and 9.2 below).

Map 9

Map 9.1. showing sheep and cattle regions requiring labour


Map 9.2. Aboriginal missions and reserves in relation to sheep and cattle areas.
Equally, from the 1950s onwards, children were a source of surplus labour to Aboriginal contract pastoral and scrub clearing groups, which meant that they accompanied their parents who exercised traditional forms of authority and not 'power' (in the modern sense as an employer does over employees) over immediate relatives or kin members. Political power was complex, and because of both customary and imposed systems of social relationships (e.g., 'Gemeinschaft') the idea of power (or 'Gesellschaft') did not apply either to groups of Aborigines operating through traditional forms of social relationships for economic reasons or to individual non-Aborigines operating family properties and businesses. For example, Yalata and Koonibba workers took their families with them when they travelled away to pastoral districts for work. Some went as far north as Commonwealth Hill and the Woomera for work and others went further north and south. As it will be revealed below, Maurice Miller, an Aborigine who lived and worked in the region, clearly indicated in his account of life around the Gawler Ranges that he travelled away with his brother to properties southeast of Ceduna.

The railway lines to the north and west were convenient for travel and also provided a dividing line within the region. The railway line to Western Australia from Port Augusta roughly formed the northern boundary between the desert and farm lands to the south. Likewise, the line from Port Augusta to the Northern Territory border not only formed a similar geographical dividing line but traversed the most marginal pastoral land. Furthermore, these two geographical dividing lines also formed a racial dividing line.

Because these geographical and racial divisions were so pronounced along the railway lines from the farming areas to the southern end of the Nullabor Plain, through to Kalgoorlie, new migratory routes began to develop. They began in the Rawlinson Ranges for people in Western Australia, and for people living in the northern border areas, in the Everard and Musgrave Ranges and ran along the old and new rail transport routes to points of significance on the edges of the desert region. Some Aboriginal

groups attempted to use the old route, which they traversed by camel, but this was rare. For example, as late as the 1940s and 1950s surplus camels (bought from white and Afghan traders) formed useful transport modes along with motor vehicles, but the latter came into use in the late 1950s when the new customary routes were well established.

The population between the turn of the century and 1930 was thus distributed thinly along the main arterial rail and road routes. These routes went: from Port Augusta north by rail to Oodnadatta and Alice Springs; from Port Augusta west by rail to Tarcoola and north by road to Coober Pedy; and by road through Penong and rail through Cook to Perth (see Map 4, p.16, Chapter 1). Originally, the westward rail link went from Port Augusta to service the copper and gold mines at Tarcoola. Aboriginal people established new customs in setting up permanent places of residence in a number of areas: at almost all railway sidings; cattle and sheep properties, mining centres and on the fringes of small towns along the rail and road routes north and west of Port Augusta.

In the period from 1900 to 1950, apart from the extension of the railway line from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie, commencement of a few more cattle and sheep properties and small mining operations, very little change took place. At the same time, customary migration routes used extensively by Aborigines before white contact were used less frequently after 1900. These routes went in two directions. One route went from the railway sidings of Ooldea, Wynbring and Tarcoola, on the edge of the Great Victoria Desert to the Everard Ranges. The other went directly north to the Everard Ranges. The rail siding at Ooldea grew in importance (though there were Aboriginal sites of significance at Tarcoola as important as Ooldea as reported by Maurice in 1902 and Bates during 1919-1927) because of the more abundant water.

3. Mortlock Library of South Australia, R.T.Maurice Private Papers Relating to 1902 Journal entries, Series Nos., ML 160,ML 158, and papers relating to aborigines, ML 157. See also Barr-Smith Library, University Of Adelaide, D.Bates, Correspondence and Photographs, Series Nos, DB 12/XIV/6c. See also, press cutting,
supplies established, first for the camel trains and then later for steam trains belonging to the Commonwealth Railways. Ethnographers have indicated that Ooldea was already an important traditional site, but the coming of the railway magnified that importance. In any event, three or more migratory routes were used by Aborigines, and it was these routes which R.T. Maurice, a non-Aboriginal surveyor, used to survey the desert region north of the Nullabor Plains.

Yet another route went from Ooldea through to the Rawlinson Ranges in Western Australia. These routes went through places called ‘pathanna’ and ‘tallaringa’ and travellers would have been dependent upon ‘native wells’ in the desert region. These customary migration routes were profoundly affected by the new forms of transport introduced as early as the 1860. By 1930 when either new railway routes were created or extensions to rail links were provided, customary migration patterns were also changed. As soon as camel, road and rail transport were introduced to the fringes of the desert region, the old, more arduous migratory routes were abandoned.

The importance of these old customary migratory routes may be indicated by the fact that the routes allowed travel across great expanses of inhospitable desert to fulfill ceremonial obligations. They were established along known water courses, and were maintained and cared for by the users. The people also had another less obvious supplementary water source which influenced the direction of the routes, and that was the small patches of mallee scrub which possessed water retaining roots. These, and other patterns were recorded by some ethnographers in the 1930s.

Daisy Bates, an observer of Aboriginal life in the region

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2.Ibid., ff.
from Eucla to Tarcoola and Port Augusta, mentions why people used the routes when she wrote,

The last manhood ceremony of Eucla was held in 1913.... A great crowd of natives straggled in by degrees, remnants from all round the plain’s edge, from Fraser Range, Boundary Dam, Israelite Bay... Penong..., and...Ayer’s Rock...700 miles and more of foot-travelling. There were numbers of women among them, as in all these gatherings an exchange of women is an important part 1 of the ceremony.

Bates mentioned that 200 people attended the ceremony which gives some indication of the importance of the desert migration route. 2

Harvey Johnson’s ethnographic research emphasised both the nature of the routes and the capacity of Aborigines to traverse vast expanses of inhospitable desert regions when he reported that

routes lead mainly from one water supply to the next one in the general direction which is being followed. The native is very sparing of water, hence a supply which he would consider ample for his needs, or for those of small parties (such as aborigines may sometimes form when on the move) would be quite insufficient for a similar party of whites, and particularly so if camel transport is being 3 used.

Johnson goes on to explain that the use of the route was determined by the water supply. Aborigines also had customary knowledge of the flora and the ground water sources. The three important water bearing species of ‘mallee’: Eucalyptus oleosa var.transcontinentalis, Casuarina decaisneana and Makea leucoptera. Despite possessing unique skills for desert living and the capacity to survive in harsh environments, Aborigines in the region were being influenced in their demographic patterns by the transport revolution. The changing demographic patterns of the Aboriginal population were to be accelerated from the 1950s to the 1980s and they were accompanied by an influx of non-Aboriginal residents.

3.Ibid., p.33.
4.Ibid., pp.34-35.
Figure 1 and Table 1

Figure 1: SA – Aboriginal and total population

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SA total</th>
<th>Aborigines total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>646,899</td>
<td>5,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>797,094</td>
<td>6,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>969,340</td>
<td>7,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>1,091,870</td>
<td>8,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,173,700</td>
<td>9,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1,244,750</td>
<td>10,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1,285,030</td>
<td>9,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1,345,940</td>
<td>14,292</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SA is South Australia

Source: ABS, Census Data, 1947-86.
For example, Figure 1 above shows both groups increasing within the state as a whole. In the region of study (see Figure 2, page 37 below), the non-Aboriginal population increases are sustained throughout the 1950s by the Maralinga nuclear weapons program. In addition, as Woomera reduced its activity in the 1960s, and Maralinga in 1965-66, the mining industries extracting uranium, coal, opals and other minerals provided a basis for constant population growth. In the 1970s the mining boom collapsed, and this phenomenon is reflected as a stable or zero population growth (see Figure 2).

The growth rates reflected in Figure 5 below, show that while total population growth rates were declining the Aboriginal population growth rates were increasing. Although not elaborated here, a dramatic decline was observed, possibly caused by a reduction of fertility among Aboriginal women and outward migration which is difficult to explain. Reports, however, indicated some migration to other states and an increased mortality rate. It is more likely that the causes are directly attributable to flaws in the census data collection methodology.

For example, if we look at Figures 3 and 4 on page 38 below, the population increases should be less dramatic in that the 1947 figure should commence at about 5,000 and link up in 1961, reflecting a smoother trend. Similarly, from 1966 to 1981 the graph should be smoother, as it is reflected in the total Aboriginal population. The answer lies in the method of counting Aborigines, which will be discussed below.

2.2. Problems of enumerating the Aboriginal population

Figures 7 and 8 on pages 40-41 below, are good examples of the underenumeration of Aborigines before 1966. Figure 7 shows that in 1947 there were 686 Aborigines in the unincorporated area. In 1961 the count revealed 565 and, by 1966, 2673. These changes, in reality, reflect the underenumeration (or loss) of

Figure 2 and Table 2

Figure 2: Study region – Aboriginal and total population

Table 2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SR total</th>
<th>SR Aborigines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>29,774</td>
<td>1,121</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>36,036</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>47,610</td>
<td>2,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>57,775</td>
<td>3,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>71,247</td>
<td>3,697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>70,224</td>
<td>4,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>71,882</td>
<td>4,512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>68,801</td>
<td>5,420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SR is study region

Source: ABS, Census Data 1947-86, Ibid.
Figure 3 and Figure 4 which include Tables 3 and 4

Figure 3: Aborigines as percentage of SA and study region populations

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study area</th>
<th>Total SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>3.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
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<td>1966</td>
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<td>1976</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>6.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SA is South Australia

Source: ABS, Census Data 1947-86.

Figure 4: Aborigines in study area as a percentage of total SA Aborigines

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SR total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
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<td>1961</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SR is study region
Figure 5 and Figure 6 which include Table 5 and Table 6.

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total pop</th>
<th>Total Aborigines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** ABS Census Data 1947-86.

**Table 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total pop</th>
<th>Total Aborigines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>0.1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7 which includes Table 7

Figure 7: Aboriginal populations in local areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Eyre</th>
<th>Unincorporated</th>
<th>Whyalla</th>
<th>Port Augusta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>686</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>2673</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>493</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>2456</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>2406</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>2347</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>1269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>2750</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>1575</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Census Data 1947-86.
Figure 8 which includes Table 8.

Figure 8: Aborigines as percentage in local areas

![Graph showing percentage of Aborigines in local areas over time]

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Eyre</th>
<th>Unincorporated</th>
<th>Whyalla</th>
<th>Port Augusta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>8.51</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>1.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>20.13</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
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<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>21.06</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>5.41</td>
<td>17.69</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>5.82</td>
<td>19.65</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Census Data 1947-86.
approximately 1200 people of full-Aboriginal descent due to the types of collection methods adopted for the census of 1966. While there is no total population for the study region shown in these two graphs, the population in the unincorporated areas should be much smoother due to the above suggested discrepancy, i.e., closer to 2,250 than 700, than the figures actually show.

For the same reasons, Aborigines living in the unincorporated area, as a percentage of the total population in the region of study, reflect the underenumeration in the area until 1966. In Figure 7, the 1947 count for Aborigines should be closer to 2,250 than 700. As depicted in Table 8, Aborigines living in the unincorporated areas as a percentage of the total population in the region of study, should be closer to 16.0 per cent in 1947, rather than either the 4.0 per cent of 1961 census or the 8.5 per cent of the 1947 census. Equally doubtful is the value reflected in Table 8 for Whyalla in 1971 when Aborigines as a proportion of the total population declined by 0.05 per cent, which suggests that there could have been either an underenumeration or an outward migration due to a down-turn in economic conditions for 1971. It is also possible that the methodology adopted by Australian Bureau of Statistics affected the totals for Whyalla because this was a period when the definition of ‘who is an Aborigine?’, had not been administratively agreed upon.

Some demographic patterns of the northern central population may be observed by looking briefly at the problems involved in counting the Aboriginal population between the late 1940s and the late 1970s.

The total South Australian population at the 1947 census was 646,063 (which excludes people of full Aboriginal descent, see Table 1 on page 35 above). This was made up of 320,021 males and 326,042 females, and included a large proportion of people with some Aboriginal ancestry.

The Chief Statistician indicated that

no full-blood Australian aboriginals have been included in the tables of Part XV., ‘Race’, …because the Commonwealth Constitution (Section 127) provides that ‘In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth,

aboriginal natives shall not be counted'. {sic}

In the census of 1947, as in earlier censuses, Aborigines were recorded in an ad hoc way by collectors. In South Australia the 1947 census recorded only 259 males and 205 female Aborigines of full-descent. The Protector in South Australia, as in other states, lodged an estimated total number of Aborigines of full-descent, '...living in a nomadic state...', which was estimated at 2,139. In its own defence, the Department indicated that it was impossible to gain accurate figures of people 'living beyond civilisation'. Moreover, legal opinion from the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department indicated that persons of half-blood are not 'aboriginal natives' for the purposes of the Constitution, and a fortiori ... persons of less than half aboriginal blood are not aboriginal natives.

The confusion over the two questions, 'who was an aborigine?' and 'what was the size of the aboriginal population?', was complicated in a number of different respects.

Despite these demographic problems, it is possible to arrive at a reasonable estimation of the population of the northern central region. As we have seen, the total population of South Australia in 1947 was 646,063 which was composed of 320,021 males and 326,042 females. In the region of study the total

4. Gray and Smith, Ibid., p. 2., claim that the CBS(or after 1972, the Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics (ABS)), has never quite got it right because,'...the definitions implicit in census questions have never conformed to it [that is the Commonwealth definition used by ABS], and can never, therefore, be said to have attempted to measure the Aboriginal population so defined.'
population was 29,774, which reflected a deviation from the general gender distribution in that this total was made up of 16,623 males and 13,151 females. Moreover, the gap between males and females had grown steadily wider. For example, in the following census, 1954, the male population rose from 16,623 in 1947 to 20,701 while, at the same time, the female population rose from 13,151 to 15,335 (see population Table in APPENDIX I). The post-war gender distribution in the northern central region had ramifications the nature of the population and for Aboriginal fertility rates. For example, in the period from 1947 to at least the census of 1971, the Aborigines of mixed descent were increasing at a faster rate than people of full-descent. It was possible to make these assessments of Aborigines from 1947 to 1961 but after that period other factors gained in importance.

'Full-bloods' (interpreted as people of more than half Aboriginal descent) were excluded from official census statistics until 1971, but were in fact enumerated with varying degrees of completeness. In the region of study, it was officially estimated that about 1700 full-blood people living in the Musgrave and Everard ranges were in some way omitted in 1947 and 1954, and over 800 Aborigines of mixed descent were also omitted in 1947. The cause underlying the omission of Aborigines of full-descent related to constitutional obligations, administrative boundaries, statistical collection methods of the day, the general migratory nature of Aboriginal groups, the changing racial identity, the composition of Aboriginal society and the political nature of the Australian Federation. The actual numbers of Aborigines omitted from the censuses at various times may have been considerably larger. Equally important is the population migration from the remote areas reflected in the period of study, but which commenced much earlier.

In the period 1947 to 1986, the enumerated Aboriginal population of the study region increased from 1,100 to about 5,500; a growth rate of 4 per cent a year. In 1947, however, the population was probably close to 3,500, representing a true

1. See Table 9. These population figures have been prepared by myself from census reports and from a combination of original primary source material copied from old ABS files Australian Bureau of Census and Statistics or from the secondary source material cited. For a comprehensive list see, 'Primary Sources' in 'Bibliography'.
2. Smith, ‘Aboriginal Population’, op.cit., see Table 7.1.1, p.98
3. Ibid., p.19.
growth rate of about 1.2 per cent a year over the 39 years, 1947 to 1986. In the same period, 1947 to 1986, the Aboriginal population of South Australia increased from an estimated 5-6,000 to over 13,000. The total population of the study area increased from 30,000 to 69,000, and the total population of South Australia increased from 650,000 to 1.3 million (see Figures 1 and 2 on pages 35 and 37, above).

In all of South Australia, except for the last few years, the Aboriginal population had been growing at about 2.5 per cent a year over most of the period under discussion, compared to the total population whose growth rate has declined from 3 per cent to less than 1 per cent a year over the period. Within the study region the Aboriginal growth rate had been similar to that for the whole state, while the total population in the study region had actually declined since the 1970s (see Figure 6 on page 39 above). Among possible factors causing this reduction could have been lessened mining activities in the 1970s and the earlier closing down of the weapons establishment.

A brief assessment of the total population will be followed by a discussion on the effects of migration on some aspects of the Aboriginal health profile.

2.3. Migratory patterns into and around region: non-Aborigines and Aborigines

2.3.1. Emigration: Non-Aborigines, early 1950s

In 1947 the total population in the region of study was 29,774 and this figure was largely made up of people in towns such as Whyalla, Port Augusta, Quorn, Ceduna and Leigh Creek. Whyalla and Leigh Creek will be elaborated upon here because of the industrial nature of these two towns.

Whyalla gained in importance when, in 1911-15, the Broken Hill Company opened an iron ore mine for use at its Port Pirie lead smelting plant across the Spencer Gulf. The greatest growth came after the Second World War when not only the federal 1 emigration program but also state development policies helped to raise steel production and, therefore, the demand for more labour. This labour came largely from overseas and was, in the 2 1950s, mainly from Britain. In the mid-1950s Whyalla with a

population of 7,845 was the largest ship-building plant in Australia and was, even in 1947, the largest South Australian urban centre outside Adelaide. The 1947 figure had increased to 1
8,598 by 1954. By 1961 Whyalla was proclaimed a city but in the 1950s it had been a company town in every respect, as will be discussed below.

Leigh Creek was named after a stockman who helped to bring the original sheep and cattle to the region in 1856. In 1950 the total population was only about 223. By 1954, however, the figure had risen to 630 and this was because of the commencement of the brown coal mining for the new electric power station being built at Port Augusta. Leigh Creek, like Whyalla, was a company town owned and run by the Electricity Trust of South Australia. At the end of the 1960s the Leigh Creek population had risen 999. At the same time, Port Augusta and Coober Pedy populations had risen dramatically.

In the twenty year period to 1966 the population in the study region had doubled. The influx was due mainly to the British weapons testing programs which brought mainly British technical, military and scientific personnel directly from England to both Woomera and Maralinga. In addition, large migrant and Australian labour was needed for ship building projects at Whyalla, Iron ore mining at Iron Knob, coal mining at Leigh Creek and railway works, and the power station at Port Augusta.

Increases in the general labourforce came from other countries including Britain. For example, in the early 1950s, migrants came from Italy, Germany and Greece. These countries collectively, however, were well below Scotland’s figure which, in 1947, stood at 5,138 and this increased to 8,349 in 1954. From figure 2, therefore, in the period 1954 to 1961, the increase was 11,574. In the next period from 1966 to 1971 the total population in the region increased by 13,472. During the next period, however, there was a decline from 1971 to 1976 and a further decline in later years. The reason for the decline was the winding down of the Woomera and Maralinga populations in the late 1960s, and the general economic conditions in the early 1970s which reduced the demand for labour. In the transition from the state Labour leadership of Walsh to Dunstan a gradual dampening

2. Ibid., Vol., 11, 1977, p.25.
4. Ibid., Vol., 6, 1977, p.86.
of economic expansion was evident and other forms of power generation was supplementing electronic supplies from coal.

2.3.2. Aboriginal population internal migration

A closer look at the Aboriginal population is required.

If we analyse the gradual drift by Aboriginal groups from the remote desert regions (Figures 7 and 8 on pages 40-41 above), we find that the Aboriginal populations of Whyalla and Port Augusta have been increasing throughout the period, both absolutely and relatively. This population movement began in 1900 and reflects migration from the rest of the study area and also other parts of the state (e.g., from Adelaide to Whyalla).

On the Eyre Peninsula, and in the remote northern areas, the Aboriginal population has remained roughly constant in size, due to regular inward and outward migration. And, as a proportion of the total regional population, Aboriginal people have clearly been moving out of the region in the period 1947 to 1980, while non-Aborigines, in the same period, have been migrating into the area. It is equally true to say that migrant groups of Aborigines set up contradictory stresses for other Aborigines of a particular region, as will be seen later.

2.4. The effects on health profiles and changes in Aboriginal traditional or customary migratory patterns

The northern central region of South Australia is geographically large and its levels of aridity have historically permitted only a limited population to occupy the region. Since the turn of the century there has been a population movement away from the central desert region. This outward migration to other areas of the region is particularly recognisable in the period from 1950 to 1979. The reasons for this are complicated by the effects of cultural, economic, political and social developments prior to and during the period of study.

One effect of the movement away from the desert region was the congregation of Aboriginal groups into camps in which they would live for prolonged periods of time and eventually pollute. These new living conditions were completely different from those

---
1. For further data on non-British migration see W. Vamplew, op. cit., 'Historical Statistics'.
Plate 2

An example of a fringe-camp in the northern area of the region

Plate 3

An example of a fringe-camp in the southern area of the region

Fringedwellers and Rabbits Live in Sandhills, Ceduna, S.A.

of bush living, where the size of camp groups and infectious pools was small. On missions, cattle properties, fringe and urban communities the populations rose sharply after 1950 and so did the pollution of the environments where overcrowding and higher incidences of communicable diseases occurred.

In the isolated desert camps health maintenance was limited by the camps’ lack of reticulated water. This caused people to become infected from a range of skin and other infections because they were either unaware that they should, or were not able to, wash regularly. Infectious diseases thrived on irritants such as blankets and unwashed clothing. Polluted campsites meant that re-infections occurred. Added to this was the custom of maintaining hunting animals within the same habitat as humans. In 1976, when Barry Jones (a world expert in trachomatology) observed conditions in the region of study, he remarked, ‘...good eye health is scarcely possible...' under the conditions in which the mainly Pitjantjatjara people live.

Infection swapping occurred as much through the actions of adults as by children. Trachoma is a disease of the home, especially when the home is also a creche. Women who have creches in their homes suffer with greater prevalence and from more severe trachoma than do men. For Aborigines there are nearly two women for each man with blinding trachoma. Trachoma is a 'secretion-swapping' disease and most 'swapping' occurs between children and their mothers. When a family was affected by trachoma, the hygiene certainly was bad.

That being said, personal hygiene is a learned practice and, as Hollows indicated in the middle of 1976...I knew things were going to be pretty bad...[in the NWAR] because of what we saw at Coober Pedy on the way in....

Our groups had been briefed by the [SA] Health Department...that trachoma rates would be of the order of something like 1%. In the homelands [the NWAR] there was a lot of trachoma....There were a lot of blind people, a lot of preventable and avoidable eye diseases, there were a lot of sick kids, a lot of skin diseases [scabies and impetigo]. There were a lot of nurses but a medical doctor was unusual. All together, the health...[profiles] of the

Pitjantjatjara people was typified by there being a lot of infectious diseases and a lot of illness that required a good general practitioner medical care. These conditions were reflected both in the region of study and, in particular, the North West Aboriginal Reserves.

Figure 9 which includes Table 9.

![Table 9: Age distribution of Aborigines and non-Aborigines seen in the region of study region of SA, by NTEHP May/June 1976](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group (years)</th>
<th>Aborigines</th>
<th>Non-Aborigines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 9 shows that larger numbers of children were seen and of those children there were more white children seen by the survey team. Even so, the prevalence of poor vision, perforated ears and the presence of the effects of trachoma, i.e., follicular scarring on the underside of the eye lid, was higher among Aborigines, as Figure 10 below demonstrates. Evidence from the North West Aboriginal Reserve showed that the incidence of follicles - small collections of white blood cells which appear as small lumps under the eye lid of a person infected by trachoma - was higher among Aboriginal children than among older male or female Aborigines who lived in the camps.

1. Ibid., f.
Figure 10 which includes Table 10.

Figure 10: Eye and ear screening results, in each region of study SA, by NTEHP, May/June 1976

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aborigines</th>
<th>Non-Aborigines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor vision</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perforated ears</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follicles</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From Figure 11 below, the North West Aboriginal Reserve communities displayed high levels of trachoma and other respiratory infections in the 'outstations' than their counterparts in areas where reticulated water and sleeping conditions off the ground prevailed. In addition, the incidence

Figure 13 which includes Table 13.

Figure 13: Perforated ears (wet and/or dry) in Aboriginal populations in the northern areas of the study region, South Australia in May/July 1976

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Under 21 years</th>
<th>Under 11 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indulkana</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min/Everard</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fregon</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernabella</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amata</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipalyatjara</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of related ear and nose infections, reflected in Figure 12 above, portrays the nature of 'excretion swapping' in a dramatic way.

Blindness rates in Figure 13 above demonstrate not only peoples' incapacity to practise adequately personal hygiene because of the lack of available water supplies. Blindness rates at Indulkana were lower than in other communities because of adequate housing and the availability of fresh reticulated water for washing. Similarly, Ernabella and Amata provide the same access to community hygiene. Hollows raised this point when he indicated that Aboriginal housing often has been treated as an architectural attempt to satisfy some empathy with traditional aboriginality, with scant regard to the health requirements of the occupants. In some situations, quite stylish rather grand concrete houses have been built for Aborigines but they have had dirt floors and no reticulated water. In other situations, romantic atavism has prevented the establishment and maintenance of healthy houses for Aborigines.

These health profiles reflect the chaos which confronted Aboriginal groups as they changed their desert lifestyles for camp living. Health and census data had always been collected in one form or another as early as the nineteenth century, but they were never made public which made it difficult for missions and for welfare workers in small country towns to understand what was happening.

At the same time, welfare services improved the prospects of whole family groups to move to areas where labour was required. This meant migration from the fringes and into urban industrial towns like Leigh Creek, Ceduna, Whyalla, Port Augusta and Coober Pedy was made easier. In addition, incentives like the payment of welfare benefits to fringe dwellers enticed people away from missions and government reserves, at least in South Australia.

2.4.1. Aboriginal migration away from desert region to the major industrial centres of the study region 1950 to 1979

In 1972 it was possible for Broom to argue that no reliable data exists in Australia on the internal

movement of population, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal (a question on internal migration was included in the 1971 Census). However, data on place of birth and place of enumeration at census time are available. Until as late as 1967 some state authorities could exercise substantial control over the movement of Aborigines who came under relevant...restrictive laws...no doubt...the reason for low rates of interstate migration.

Despite this claim, Tables 7 and 8 (see pages 40 and 41 above) and Figures 7 and 8 show that internal migratory patterns are able to be compiled and do show long term movement patterns. The same could be said of more recent assumptions about the prospects of what is called the 'out-station movement'.

There have been a number of assumptions that the 'out-station movement' (a concept which attempted to depict a re-migration of reserve, government settlement, fringe-dwelling, cattle-station and missionised peoples '...to return in smaller more homogeneous groups to land which they and their ancestors were traditionally identified...') is not only keeping large populations in the so called 'homelands region' but also encouraging people from urban areas to return to the 'homelands' areas. These assumptions were as incorrect in the 1979 as they were in 1946 when Dr. Duguid discussed the question of 'detribalisation' with the Long Range Weapons Establishment committee. Duguid was in no way reluctant to concede that the

1 Broom and Jones, 'A Blanket', op.cit., pp.51-52.
area was already being depopulated, which was based on his 1930s
1
reconnaissance to the area with Strehlow and Albrecht.

Clearly, the population was increasing in Port Augusta in
2
1946 when Duguid and the Long Range Weapons Establishment
personnel were discussing the matter. Figures 7 and 8 (see pages
40-41 above) indicate that people had been moving to the
industrial centres on the periphery of the region since 1947. It
has been indicated, however, that there was also a certain level
of migration from the North West Aboriginal Reserves to areas in
the Northern Territory such as Areyonga (a Northern Territory
3
administered reserve). Figures 7 and 8 (above) should reflect a
smoother pattern of population growth from the late-1950s to the
mid-1970s because while there was a growth from natural increase
there was also population movement to Northern Territory reserves
due to policy considerations. The idea that the North West
Aboriginal Reserve populations were increasing as a result of
inward migration will be challenged when discussing outstations
4
movements in chapter six.

In the case of Port Augusta, which had been attracting a
considerable number of Aboriginal people of both full- and mixed
descent to live in the town itself, the population had been
5
increasing since 1947. After 1961, the Aborigines Protection
Board report to parliament reflect an expansion of welfare
services in places such as Coober Pedy and documentary evidence
is supported by oral sources which indicate that Aboriginal
people were aware of an increase in welfare services. This trend,
as we will see later, was an important further attraction for
people to migrate to urban centres. Populations came directly
from government reserves, cattle and sheep properties, missions
and from small service towns to the urban areas of Port Augusta,
Ceduna and Leigh Creek, partly because of the availability of

1. F.W.Albrecht, 'Journey with Missionary F.W.Albrecht in 1939',
in M.Lohe, C.J.Pfitzner and S.H.Held (Eds), Lutheran Almanac
2.Copied from L.R.Smith's unpublished 1947 census tabulations and
collector’s forms from CBS file 68/669/7, papers entitled 'Census
1947, Aborigines - Full-Bloods, All States. Males Females For
Each Local Government Area.
4.Tregenza, loc.cit., p.3.
5.J.M.Jacobs, 'Aboriginal Land Rights In Port Augusta',
unpublished thesis, Dept, Geog., Adelaide University, 1983,
pp.118-120.
Map 10 showing location of Aboriginal communities in or near the North West Aboriginal Reserve (NWAR) or now known as 'The Pitjantjatjara Lands

Source, D. Hope, op. cit.
such welfare services. Because Whyalla was the second largest town in South Australia much of the surplus labour was provided from Adelaide. The growing Aboriginal population in Adelaide, Ceduna and in the fruit-growing districts of the River Murray districts were to provide the inward source of the Whyalla Aboriginal migrant population.

The demographic tendency of Aborigines of both full- and mixed descent had been, from 1900 to the 1980s, to change their migratory routes and, in turn, to abandon the desert regions. While the Aboriginal population had been maintaining an increasing rate of growth, in the period from 1947 to 1980, there had been an increase in that group’s numbers in the region's peripheral industrial and rural service centres of Whyalla, Port Augusta and Ceduna. It is equally true to say that, as economic conditions fluctuated, a high proportion of the Aboriginal community migrated, on occasions, to other areas. For example, seasonal conditions provided employment in fruit picking areas where pickers could live either with or without a large stock of material possessions, such as in camping areas. The destination of migrating Aborigines, however, was not towards the so-called homeland centres nor to the Northern Territory and Adelaide. As shown above, the movement was towards the industrial areas. The non-Aboriginal population, however, shows a different trend.

This chapter demonstrated how actively Aborigines feature in a historical emigration process in the north central area of South Australia. The main event taking place in the region, and period of study, was that Aborigines were migrating away from the desert, mission, fringe and service town communities. At the same time, non-Aborigines were migrating into the region. From the early twentieth century Aboriginal people had been moving off land traditional to them and on to missions, pastoral properties, into mining and service towns and, finally, into the industrial towns such as Whyalla, Port Augusta, Ceduna and Leigh Creek.

Then, from the mid-1960s to 1979 migratory patterns were influenced by the weapons research projects, pastoral prosperity, mining developments, changes railway routes, the service industries and race relations policy. In particular, the Commonwealth (later the Australian National) Railway provided the means for Aboriginal peoples to change their migration patterns.

2.Ibid., pp.44-48.
In 1960 the fringe-camps had become a feature of small towns along the old and new migration routes. Internal migration saw populating of old towns on the arterial road and rail routes, and an increased population in the newly created towns.

From 1947 the total population in the region of study increased dramatically. This had occurred for two major reasons. Firstly, the Woomera rocket range development attracted a large contingent of scientists from Britain. At the same time the Woomera facilities enabled Britain and Australian defence authorities to conduct early atomic tests in this region. Based upon the success of the Emu land-based tests, the Maralinga permanent testing site helped to sustain population growth in the 1950s and early 1960s. To this must be added the growth consequent upon the coal, opals, uranium and petro-product mining and transportation industries in the period from 1950 to 1980.

Secondly, the post war economic boom provided the Playford government with the capacity to foster the opening up of brown coal resources at Leigh Creek. Initially the coal went to Adelaide then to the Port Augusta power station, which provided power for ship building and the steel mills of the Broken Hill Company at Whyalla and smelters at Port Pirie. In the decade from 1950 to 1960 the non-Aboriginal population increase was accelerated by the weapons projects. But, by the mid-1960s to 1979, these increases were sustained by mining, pastoral and transport developments. In particular the railways provided a range of services from Port Augusta (passenger and freight) to Alice Spring and Perth, and also from Port Augusta to Leigh Creek. In the 1960s a new route affected the small towns along the old route, strengthened old towns on the arterial road route, and created new ones. In addition, the new route had an important role in the maintenance of pastoralists’ political, economic and social power. It also encouraged the rise of mining, which is the subject of chapter three.

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1.I.Southall, Woomera, Angus and Robertson, 1962, pp.71-82.
Chapter 3

The transformation of 'pastoral hegemony': 1950 to 1979

3.1. Introduction

This chapter investigates the way pastoralists dominated the economic, social, political and cultural lives of other groups in the northern central region of South Australia in the 1950s. By 1979, however, that dominance had been transformed to a sharing relationship with other groups. The analysis will cover the background to the pastoral dominance which prevailed in 1950. It also inquires into questions relating to the types of pastoralists in the region, the activities they were engaged in and who some of the property owners were. In addition, an assessment will be made of the postwar prosperity enjoyed by the pastoralists, and whether that was passed on to the rural labourforce.

3.1.1. The background to pastoral dominance to 1950

In 1950 the livestock industry was the most important industry in the northern central region. Settlement of the region had been proceeding since the late nineteenth century and focused upon cropping and sheep pasturing. The pastoral industry was highly dependent upon markets in Britain, which, in turn relied upon the stock and station agents to get the products to market. In addition, the cattle industry in the north of South Australia had not developed to its full potential. Transport systems consisted mainly of the rail linkages between Port Augusta and Alice Springs to the north and Kalgoorlie in Western Australia. The road system consisted mainly of bush tracks previously used by bullock and camel drawn vehicles, and later heavy duty cattle trucks or road trains. The pastoral industry

1 R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, Class Structure in Australian History, Longman Cheshire, Sydney, 1980, pp.22-23. The pastoralists' political relationship to government determined their hegemonic relations. A hegemonic relationship may be regarded as one where the dominant class is highly mobilised. . . . The formation and maintenance of hegemony may be thus regarded as a process whereby the holders of power - whether by conscious policy or standing institutional arrangements - resist the process of class formation on the part of the labourforce and resist the development of a heightened class consciousness. Anything that serves to disorganise the working class, to disrupt class solidarity, to contain or deflect the action of working-class groups, will then be a mechanism of hegemony.
was both a major Australian exporter and a major earner of revenue for the region.

3.2. Pastoral dominance, pastoralism and pastoralists

South Australian early twentieth century history may be described as contained 'within [the] Whiggish framework of... single-minded resolution..., non-conformism, dissent and reforming zeal...'. This description, apart from the reforming zeal, could be applied to the pastoralists of areas north and west of Port Augusta, and in particular the idea of the pastoralist's single-mindedness. How did this single-mindedness manifest itself? A closer look is necessary at some of the landowners' characteristics and their way of life.

3.2.1. The pastoralists of the region of study

The landowners fell into three main categories. The first were landowners who operated through family companies such as the McLachlin and McBride companies. The second category were larger companies, such as the Kidman Company. The third category were the 'battlers' or individual landowners such as Mick O'Donohue. In order to simplify the description only four pastoralists will be discussed as typical of a larger group. These pastoralists will be drawn from the McLachlan and Kidman company managers, and families such as the Breadons and Mick O'Donohue. Some mention will be made of P.A.M. (later Sir Philip) McBride whose pastoral company held a number of properties in the region. McBride was chairman of a large stock and station agency and a member of the Menzies cabinet from 1950 to 1958. Aspects of pastoralism will be provided to give a broad picture of their personal qualities and careers, as observed by others or as they saw themselves.

3.2.2. What was life like on a pastoral property?

Properties owned by companies, both sheep and cattle, were managed by company-appointed managers. The manager occupied the main homestead and the stock labour occupied the 'outbuildings' or, as Aborigines did, lived some distance away in fringe camps. One observer discusses how a worker at the McLachlan family homestead at Granite Downs lived:

to get my food and water I had to go to Granite Downs

A typical pastoralist of the region in the 1950s and 1960s.
Plate 4


The old cattle station homestead

The New style of pastoral homestead
station...and fill a forty four gallon drum. I remember the steaks they had there were magnificent....The pastoralist had developed the land according to their values and interests...[which was]to make it pay and make the cattle reproduce....They built a big stone mansion, a big homestead ...They just built a new one at Granite Downs when I was there....It was a colonial mansion with big breezeways stone with big roof, big verandah. The manager was a real 'bush man'...The owner was Mclachlan.

In 1967-68...the mansion had just been built,...I remember Hugh Mclachlan flying in...he didn't talk to me. The manager did not live in an opulent style as he would if he was the owners did....[say at Everard park].

Not all homesteads, however, were set in the colonial mode.

Most homesteads were well shaded while others appeared stark and less-cared-for. But the number of trees or types of gardens depended on the water quality and quantity. For these reasons places like Mulgathing and Commonwealth Hill, both of which were owned by the Mclachlan pastoral company, had scant tree coverage while places such as Lake Everard, Lake Frome or Everard Park were well shaded.

The manager’s job involved getting the stock to market, shifting stock to grassed areas and watering points, branding the stock and attending to stock-watering facilities. Maintenance to damaged or deteriorated machines went on continually and equipment had to be replaced periodically such as out-dated water tanks and windmills. While the managers would not actually do the repairs they had to arrange for the tasks to be done.

Windmills were a specialist task, as Henry Cox says that

after I left Bulgunia I went back to Mt Eba I went back as a windmill expert just in-charge of pallets (platforms on windmills), bores, windmills...tanks, everything. You’d have to keep them in repair and go around...oil them, the old 'comets' the mighty mill of the country...in my opinion. They worked on wooden bearings, the old comet,...The wind-

mill was the most important thing going on stations...if you haven’t got water you haven’t got stock....

Another specialist task was mustering stock.

Station properties differed in their size from 18,000 to 30,000 hectares in area and required considerable effort to bring the stock together for transportation to markets in Adelaide. In 1950 mustering was normally done by employing cheap Aboriginal labour. By 1955, however, contract labour was more efficient. These contractors used capital-intensive methods, introducing motor cycles and light planes. They also brought in their own horses. Aboriginal labour could not compete with such efficiency and they were made redundant. On the larger private stations such as Todmorden, the manager would normally travel alone checking the progress of the various contract groups. Meanwhile, his wife would be left in charge of the homestead.

The Breadon family preferred to believe that loneliness was not necessarily a problem of remote living. As one writer remarks:

for example, remote Todmorden homestead was 1,460 km from Adelaide and 160 km from Northern Territory border, Mollie Breadon manages the station on her own. Mollie...claimed that she was always too busy to be lonely....She is a house wife too. Although she has native girls to do ‘the housework’ and ‘the dishes’ she does all the cooking when she is not out on the run, and rises at the crack of dawn to get breakfast for all the hands.

Sunday morning provides a picturesque sight for visitors to the station. The natives come in then for their stores. Mollie gives out free rations of flour, sugar, tea, jam, tobacco and other items to the old pensioners and the [Aboriginal] working boys’ dependents.

Pastoralists such as Dick Nunn had to cope with station life in different ways. One pastoral worker describes his observations of a pastoral manager, in 1959. This observer was a city person working as a stock worker for the first time:

I went to work for the Kidman pastoral company at Anna Creek station....When I first saw the homestead I was amazed....I couldn't conceive of so much space....I had a typical urban upbringing....I got on all right with the staff....The manager was Dick Nunn, who was...a bit of a legend in pastoral circles himself. [Dick Nunn]...had worked his way up through Kidmans from being a stockman himself to managing Anna Creek station,...the largest cattle station in the world. So I got on alright with him. Allan Young was ...in charge of the stock camp he was the head stockman. There...[were] about fifteen to seventeen young Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stock worker[s].

Richard Trevena continued with his personal reaction to the pastoral manager at Anna Creek, when he said,

I was struck by the way...[Dick Nunn] never appeared to be bushed [that is, confused,] and never...seemed to lose his temper, despite the fact that he lived in...trying circumstances in an isolated area. [He had]...to provide his own services...[of] water and power, and being responsible for not only a large property but [also] a large cattle herd in one of the most famous pastoral companies in the world. He was always good humoured, intelligent, keen to teach people and lived in...an unconventional lifestyle.... He had fifteen children. Seven from his wife Connie who was a non-Aboriginal woman and eight from Aboriginal women from the local people who lived around Marree and Oodnadatta.

Land owners such as these held leases on the edge of the desert like Mick O'Donohue had done and they were battlers who survived on the edge of poverty. One observer described what life was like indicating that the last seriously occupied land was Moorilana, a cattle station subsequently and probably better known as Granite Downs...,[later to be owned by the McLachlan pastoral company]. Mick O'Donohue owned it...[and] ran his establishment along primitive lines; his 'loo' consisted of

2.Ibid., ff.
three greenhides, laced as they came from the beast....Mick was as crude as they come, a true son of the soil. He was quite a philosopher,...and yet unsure of himself, carrying a gun. At that time the tribes had no love for such people as Mick O'Donohue.

Most pastoralists, however, were neither 'battlers' nor as disorganised or as brutish as Mick O'Donohue.

For example, the pastoralist was considered by their white labour as humane, fair and cooperative, according to Jimmy Franklin when he said,

I 'recon' they were dam good blokes, myself. They were hard tough men, as long as you done your work you always had a job....They were all good people, ...as long as you did up to fourteen hours a day you were all right. They were reared that way and they were taught that everybody else had to do the same.

After the war, these two stock workers recalled that conditions began to improve, at least for the pastoralists

[conditions] sure did [change],.... After the war [the living for stock workers] got a lot better....Doug Fuller [from De Rosa Hill] got a Bedford truck, he only had a little old Chevy', and he took a big mob of cattle in [to the Adelaide market] and he never looked back, old Doug. He got all his country fenced in. Now I think they got aeroplanes and all, helicopters,...a big engine for lights. They built accommodation for stockworkers. In the 1950s wood stoves were used in the kitchen and by the 1960s coke, slow-combustion stoves, then, after a while, bottled gas in the 1970s.

All property owners seemed to improve their equipment by installing electricity generators and telephones. Motor vehicle transport changed from:

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3. Ibid., ff.
Plate 5

Frank Smith a pastoral land-owner from the north of South Australia 1970.

Wyllys Jeeps, American war-surplus, and they all started to buy landrovers....The graders came in the the 1950s around the roads. Telephones had come in lately up past Oodnadatta, but all the 'sheep people' had telephone in their own houses down around Commonwealth Hill. 'Cattle people' were different people than the sheep people. They were different people altogether.

Ross Scobie explained further that the 'sheep people' were more conscious of their status than the 'cattle people',

[and] you could travel [from Quorn north] and you could pass a dozen [sheep properties]...nobody’d ask you in for a drink'a tea or anything. Once you got outside that 'netting fence' [that is the dingo fence] and into the cattle country, you pulled-up and had a feed and a talk with the people who owned...[the property]....I can remember going home with our first daughter and it was bloody cook'ya [that is, it was hot], and we pulled-up at the Twins (a sheep station near the highway)....I asked [the owner] if there was any chance of getting a bit of water for the little baby....He said that he was not in the habit supplying the travelling people with water....I went on from there to Mable Creek....Old Alf Turner was at Mable Creek and you might just as well'a drove home. You could...do whatever you liked, camped, had breakfast and everything was different.

Both Jimmy Franklin and Ross Scobie felt that the sheep graziers were wealthier than the cattle grazing property owners. They must be assessed together, however, because of the paucity of information about their wealth. For this reason a broader measure - their capacity to generate revenue - is a better guide than simply monetary worth.

3.2.3. The revenue earning capacity of the pastoral industry of the northern central region

To gauge pastoralists' revenue earning capacity, in the absence of specific empirical data, the size of grain crop, the numbers of sheep and the cattle production will be analysed. In addition, a brief discussion on the conditions of labour sets the scene for later decades.

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1.Franklin and Scobie, Ibid., ff.
2.Ibid., ff.
At Don Dunstan's fiftieth birthday celebration. Left to right: Gough Whitlam, Tom Playford, Bob Hawke and Don Dunstan.

**AT CONGRESS OPENING**

After his address at the opening of the Agricultural Bureau Congress in the Bonython Hall last week, the Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) talked with the Minister of Agriculture, Sir George Jenkins (left) and Professor H. C. Trumble, of Waite Agricultural Research Institute. A full report of Mr. Menzies' speech appeared last week.

Pastoral dominance in the northern areas was consolidated by a conservative alliance with the Liberals whose political power was centred in Adelaide. Pastoralists relied on Liberal support to hold the land they leased. The importance of the narrow corridor of land they occupied was determined by artesian water supplies and access to cheap rail transportation. The stock production was thus confined to the eastern and northern central parts of the state.

One Liberal politician who realised the importance of the pastoral and Liberal alliance was Thomas Playford. Playford was a rural land owner and producer who became Premier of South Australia in 1938. Although Playford favoured supplementing his economic and political support in the urban regions through his policy of industrialisation, he nonetheless maintained a strong rural interest. In 1950, rural products such as wheat, sheep and beef were major generators of revenue and employment in the region. Although small mining companies, transport and the service industries were present, it was the pastoral industry which had been the major employer of rural labour since the nineteenth century. Most of this rural labour was Aboriginal labour. The reason for this was that the majority of the population in many areas in 1950 were Aborigines. This was particularly true in the outlying sheep and cattle properties to the western areas of the region where Aboriginal labour till the late-1960s was the only available casual labour capable of providing a regular supply of seasonal workers. Even though some towns contained white men for supervisory (or management) labour, those Aborigines living in the fringe camps near service towns such as Marree provided the seasonal 'contract-type' labourforce.

The rainfall patterns of the northern central region of South Australia were a major factor in determining a particular production choice or quantity of stock. In turn these two factors bore heavily upon the revenue base of the pastoral industry. The annual rainfall of the region had falls within the range 127 to 2.

2.As indicated above, it was not contract labour. As Aboriginal boys had been trained in the early twentieth century to provide the necessary labour it became a traditional way of life which they managed by way of previously non-capitalist relations.
254 millimetres. This measure of precipitation divides the entire region equally between the categories of 'arid' and 'semi-arid'. The rainfall patterns for 1950 were from 188 millimetre in January to 208 millimetres in December. The above average falls was due to unusually heavy rain in that year.

The area of the interior which takes in the northern reserves and extends down to Port Augusta, reflects a '...spectacular climate typical of desert regions.' This typical desert region forms 58 per cent of the area of South Australia. But the southern half of the region enjoys a milder climate than the northern part of the state. Despite the arid and semi-arid characteristics of the region, extremes of climate are not uncommon. Coober Pedy which only has an average rainfall of 114.3 millimetres, for example, is often inundated with falls of up to 254.0 millimetres. Equally astonishing are the extremes of temperature which fluctuate from 74 to 116 degrees fahrenheit, in of lake systems may fill to capacity.

Another climatic feature of the northern central region is that a prolonged period may pass without the lakes systems ever containing water. Pastoralists therefore relied heavily upon permanent water sources from the three artesian basins dominating the region's water resources: the Great Artesian Basin, Western Shield and the Eucla Basin. In many places from Port Augusta to Oodnadatta water percolates to the surface forming permanent springs. These areas located along the old rail route were the areas first used for cattle production and, as such, provided a convenient route for the Alice Springs railway line. Because of

the difficult character of the region pastoralists saw the rail route as vital to their economic, political and social interests.

The rail route made the release of crown land for stock and grain production important for the pastoralists' revenue raising capacity and for the employment prospects of the local labourforce.

The amount of new land brought into production for either pastoral or cropping purposes reflected the land owners existing and future prospects of prosperity and of those who relied upon it for work. There were two types of available land in the area west and north of the immediate hinterland of Port Augusta. The increase in land released from government stocks of unalienated land just prior to 1950 was 169,626 acres. The other form of land tenure was land leased mainly for grazing purposes and amounted to a total increase in the region of 373,440 acres. This represented a huge increase in the change of land use when considered in the context of the amount of land clearing that occurred each year to bring new land under cultivation. The increase in the number of people owning land in the region was hidden but nonetheless significant. Moreover, it is important to evaluate the increase in the value of stock and crops in analysing the revenue raising capacity of the land owning pastoralists and graziers.

In 1949 there was only a million acres leased in the region. In a two-year period from 1950 to the end of 1952, despite a reduction of 75,516 acres, the total land leased in the region rose to 8,199,871 acres. In addition, total livestock and grain production increased in the 1950s. For example, cattle numbers grew from 8,506 in 1950 to 200,000 in 1952 and by March of 1965 to 435,000. At the end of the period of study in 1978 this number had increased to 1,242,000 of predominantly English breeds.

Sheep numbers followed similar trends in the period from 1950 to 1979. For example, in 1950 the total number carried in the region was approximately 978,381, which excludes the numbers held in the Peterborough to Broken Hill region. In 1977-8, in

2.Ibid., ff.
the northern district between Quorn and Lake Eyre, numbers of live sheep held on properties had swollen, to approximately 4 million.

The pattern for crops was similar. For example, the amount of increase in wheat grew from 17.2 million bushels in 1950 to 100.91 million bushels, which is the total production figure for South Australian. Other crops grew similarly, in particular rye.

The relative increases in cattle stock numbers in most parts of the region reflected the buoyancy of the pastoral industry in the period from 1950 to 1960. Similarly, the doubling of sheep flocks meant that their numbers were returning to pre-war levels. Cattle sent to market were declining in number as were cattle numbers slaughtered and exported. Curiously, wool prices rose along with the growth in sheep numbers, as did the size of the wool clip. The clip increased from 72,604,00 pounds to 106,707,00 pounds prior to 1950, for the whole of South Australia. In effect, war-time stock piles were disposed of and flock sizes and production rose. The reverse of market trends, it was claimed, was because the price of wool was set outside of Australian markets, which sounds strange. The average price of Australian wool was 15.7 pence per pound. The optimism was only partly realised in the form of higher incomes for sheep graziers. The greatest gains in the northern central region, however, were for the wheat and sheep regions which normally had higher rainfall like the Burra and the Gawler Ranges region.

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1. Ibid., p.410.
2. Ibid., p.408. For earlier years see also, A.W. Bowden (ed.), South Australian Statistical Register: 1949-50, Pt V, p.38. Note that these figures are taken up to the 31st March 1950.
3. Ibid., p.39.
revenue which accrued to pastoralists and graziers may be further gauged by the fact that the sheep industry was not the only rural production process which experienced large gains in the postwar period until 1950.

The average price of wheat per bushel, in the period to 1950, fluctuated from 6 shillings and 2 pence per bushel in 1945-46 to 12 shillings and 11.5 pence in 1947-48, back to 10 shillings and 5.5 pence in 1948-49 and then, in 1950-51 to 11 shillings and 11.5 pence. In high rainfall areas barley acreages and yields almost doubled in the period from 1945 to the mid-1950s. These yield trends were reflected in the Eyre Peninsula and the western regions in general, because barley grows best close to coastal areas. What was significant (showing increases of agricultural land, and its product) is that even though the price of wool increased in an exceptional fashion other rural produce increased in price too but their productivity was disguised by the amount of new land brought into crop production.

An additional influence upon the pastoralists' revenue was the developmental role played by service agencies such as Goldsborough Mort, Dalgety, and Elder Smith on people's standard of living, and a brief analysis of this important group follows. The headquarters, or state-based head offices, of these national and international agents was in Adelaide. The reason for this was that it was close not only to the rural produce markets but also to the seat of government. In many respects these stock agencies represented graziers' political, social and economic interests and the agencies' branches were strategically located to enable staff to develop personal relations with individual farmers thereby catering to their every need. In the remote rural areas they supplied pastoralists with market support, arranged for the produce to be transported to market and for the proceeds to forwarded on to the grazier. Following this will be a brief analysis and evaluation of the labourforce conditions in the region.

3.2.4. Rural product 1950 to 1979: the stock and station agents

South Australian pastoralists would not have been able to maintain their prosperous economic or their political position had it not been for the important partnership they had with the large stock and station agents. For example, following the Second World War the main stock and station agents were Dalgety and Co. Ltd, Goldsbrough Mort and Co. Ltd, Elder Smith and Co. and finally Bennett and Fisher. Stock and station agents were part and parcel of the development of the region in the late-nineteenth century. Elder and Barr-Smith were well established in the region by the 1930s. Although contraction of economic activity during the depression of the 1930s closed a number of branches, soon after the Second World War the agents were at the forefront of the post-war economic boom.

The influence of these stock and station brokerage houses extended between London, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and also the northern central region towns. They had branches in places such as Port Augusta, Ceduna and, after 1950, Quorn. A.L.Elders and Co. had been traders in the region since 1855 and became Elder-Smith and Co. By 1962, Elders-Goldsbrough Mort and Co. had many branches around Australia (from Richmond in Queensland to Carnarvon in Western Australia). Briefly, the agents gained their income in the following way: in 1948-49 Elders reported a half yearly dividend of 4 per cent in December of 1948; the same occurred in July 1949, together with a bonus dividend of 2 per cent, totalling 10 per cent for 1948-49. Philip McBride indicated to shareholders that,

You will note from the printed report...that the net income for year ended 30th June, 1949, at £380,687 is substantially above...the previous years trading and is, in fact, a record for the company.

1. Teamwork, Elder Smith's Staff magazine (see the following article and issues), 'Elders-GM's fingers on the nation's pastoral pulse', November, 1973, pp.5-6. Ibid., 'PAD - the roll on, roll off shipping people', August 1974, pp.28-31. Ibid., '100 years later Elders is dealing in camels again', August 1975, pp.4-5. Ibid., 'A touch of history', April 1976, pp.1-4. Ibid., 'A Touch of history...concluded', July 1976, pp.10-21 (this article includes extracts of Thomas Mort's diary 1836-1838). Ibid. 'Elders in WA - 1900-1977, October, 1977, pp.6-10. The articles listed here may be located in the ANU Archives of Business and Labour, Canberra, in Series S249.
This reflected an increased dividend, of £20,000,* paid to shareholders of the company in the previous year. This indicated that profitability had risen, but it was more in line with rising wool prices rather than productivity in the wool industry. For example, as indicated earlier, the northern central region had responded only marginally to the post-Second World War economic boom both in terms of pastoral (stock and grain) output and in providing increased employment prospects to the labourforce.

By 1955 Elders reported an expansion of branches in the region of study and substantial increases in the sale of wool bales (440,374 to 448,336), sheep (4.11 down to 4.13 millions) and cattle (up from 191,400 to 209,100 head). This was reflected in a turnover from £19,457,000 to £19,761,500, and a profit of £792,637 after dividends of 12 per cent per annum was paid to shareholders.

The circumstances had changed in the decade from 1956 to 1966 which forced companies to amalgamate to reduce their losses caused by falling wool prices. In 1958 wool prices slumped to below the 1955 price levels. Wool prices continued to fall and as they a number of companies decided to maximise their profits by a merger. Companies like Elder Smith and Co. Ltd, Goldsbrough Mort Ltd merged during 1962. It was a time when it appeared to the companies in the industry that there would be a recovery after the 1958 collapse of wool prices. The industry hoped for a return to the prosperity of the pre-1958 wool prices. Each time this happened the Australian Wool Board suggested the establishment of a 'price stabilisation' plan. The plan was recommended in 1965 and 'The Reserve Price Plan for Wool Marketing' be adopted. The plan recognised that this modification to the auction system would not alone achieve the required level of stability in wool prices. The process continued throughout the 1970s as wool and sheep producers struggled against synthetic fibres and export competition from beef.

2.P.A. McBride, Chairman’s Address, Elder, Smiths and Co., LTD., Director’s Report to Annual General Meeting: Tuesday 23rd August 1949, Adelaide 5th August 1949, p.3., see ANU Archives of Business and Labour, Series No., N109/52.
3.*£=Pounds Sterling sign.

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1.Ibid., p.1.
2.B.A. Wright, (Grazier’s Ass., NSW), Wool Marketing Referendum: Vote No, Pub., GANSW, 1965, pp.1.32.
3.2.5. Pastoral hegemony: land and labour

The last fifteen years of Playford’s premiership was noted for the industrial development and prosperity inside the northern region. Two events profoundly influenced the people who lived in the region. First, there were the arrangements between the government and the pastoral lease-holders; and second, the effects of post-war economic boom.

By 1950 two important struggles underlay the pastoral land leasing arrangements: first, the struggle for preferences between the government and the land lessees; second, the struggle between pastoralists and bureaucrats for control of the leasing arrangements.

Before the Second World War pastoralists had been receiving preferential treatment either in terms of the legislative arrangements which allowed leaseholders to convert earlier leasing conditions or by providing a consultative process for pastoralists to seek help whenever they wanted it. Meeting the wishes of lease holders continued into the 1940s. In 1944 the management and tenure arrangements were changed to allow for soil conservation and, what have been described as ‘housekeeping powers, to waive covenants and to add small areas’ of land to bigger ones. The changes enabled

lease covenants to be waived or varied...and enabled small areas of adjacent land to be added to a lease without calling for applications. Providing all interested parties consented amendments made it possible to alter lease boundaries when they could not be conveniently fenced and

when they were inconveniently located.

From 1945 to 1948 these conditions of leasing prevailed and to avoid problems between leaseholders over the ownership of stock straying beyond the dingo fences, a further amendment was required. The amendment allowed for unbranded calves to be branded provided they were outside the dog fence. Adjoining lessees were given between fourteen and twenty eight days to lodge notices of intent to claim stray stock as their own.

Secondly, Playford increased the numbers of pastoralists’ representatives on the bureaucratic land control body. Changes to

pastoral lease legislation during the transitional period from 1950 to 1979 helped pastoralists to hold greater amounts of allocated (or alienated) land under pastoral lease arrangements which at the beginning of the period was 58 per cent. A further 25 per cent was unoccupied, or unalienated, Crown land. In 1950 the remaining 17 per cent was Weapons Research Establishment land, except for a small area called the Ooldea Aboriginal Reserve. From 1950 to 1979 the changes amounted to the following:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type of Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Changes to legislation re branding cattle outside the 'dog fence';*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Minister For Lands was provided for in the new legislation and given powers to add fourth member (presumably a pastoralist);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Simultaneous Expiry of Lease made possible in that pastoralists who held numerous leases could arrange for expiry to end on same date;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Renewal Rights extended to 'Average Leases' which meant that because most pastoralists were 'Averaging Leases' and now should be made standard in that small and large leases would no longer be grounds for discrimination;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Conversion of lease made possible in 1960-61, in that in 1960 nearly half of all leases were due to expire between 1971-75 and most were subject to low rent set in 1930 and increases were pegged at 50% increases only. Greater security was demanded by lessees and they saw this as, ...[amending] the Act so that in the twelve months following December 1960 lessees could surrender their leases in exchange for a 42 year lease subject only to seven year rent reassessments. In addition pastoralists agreed to provide a graduated scale of improvements;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Shorter leases to replace Annual leases to enable government to resume required the change;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Mining industry threaten pastoral improvements and amendment required to protect same;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Water clauses removed from new Water legislation;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* a dingo fence, to protect livestock.

The analysis of the period 1945-1979 shows that the region’s productive capacity, despite some experience of drought, emerged from the Second World War in a prosperous condition. In the main, the prosperity was most evident in the expansion of crops and, as increasing wool prices showed, the post-war economic boom was spasmodic in the northern central region. The rural labourforce, too, experienced some growth in numbers and opportunity for long term employment. Pastoral lessees enjoyed considerable land management and tenure facilities together with considerable sympathy from the Playford regime. They would continue to attract some patronage from the Labor government in 1965 until Dunstan retired in 1979. In exchange for Dunstan’s patronage the pastoralists had to share both political power and land with others. Aboriginal labour was one group. The land question was not a difficult one, as will be demonstrated. The paucity of statistical data specifically on labour questions relating to ‘race’ are not available. Some guide is, however, possible and the discussion of relations between property owners and Aboriginal labour will be confined to the period of study.

The question to be explained was whether the property owners and managers were passing on the post-war prosperity to the pastoral labour.

3.3. The conditions of labour: 1950 to 1979

The estimated size of the labourforce in the pastoral and cropping industries in 1950-51 was:

Table 15

Estimated number of workers on pastoral properties in the northern central region of SA: 1950-51

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>1950 M</th>
<th>1951 M</th>
<th>1950 F</th>
<th>1951 F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper Nth</td>
<td>875</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>75*</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1,893</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>2,262</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These figures are inflated by the inclusion of males and females described as temporary wage labour. Source:
The rural workforce, from Table 15, experienced a sharp increase in the early 1950s as the post-war economic boom began to take effect. The employment prospects for males was evidently better in the rural areas than for females. Although not recognised at the time, differences in the numbers of male and female property ownership could have had more to do with taxation questions than any inequality between the two groups as property owners.

There was no way of measuring either the numbers of property owners or of measuring the workforce. The mid- and far-northern areas were the habitats of many small family groups of Aborigines who worked either as permanent wage labour on sheep, cattle and cropping properties or as temporary contract workers. Aboriginal labour, many of whom were trained at church missions, was almost the only source of surplus labour in these two grazing zones. But there are no statistical data either on 'race' or on wage labour, a factor which will be explained in more detail below.

From its inception the church mission at Ernabella was both a Presbyterian Christian mission and an important pastoral labour training centre of Aboriginal workers for the pastoral industry on properties adjacent to the North West Aboriginal Reserve. The Aborigines Protection Board acknowledged the missions' contribution in its 1949 annual report:

There are 91 workers on the paysheet at present. Four new wells have been sunk by qualified native workmen on various parts of the mission to permit the use of extensive grazing areas. The sheep industry is flourishing, the shearing and shepherding of sheep being done by the native...Women and girls are receiving instruction in wool spinning, weaving and handicraft.

In fact, throughout the region, although many people, particularly women, old men and the infirm, were not able to work, many Aborigines were in the workforce. For example, the


Protection Board reported that a number of Ooldea male Aborigines were employed on a film, 'Bitter Springs', being made for the Ealing Studios in Britain at Quorn. Another example of the use of missions as training centres was at the Nepabunna mission where its location serviced a large area of the Flinders Ranges (see Map 9.1 and 9.2. in Chapter 2).

In 1950 wool prices were higher than they had ever been and they were to rise even further. Life on many of the sheep properties for Aborigines was not as secure as it was when they lived under the protection of either the Aborigines Protection Board or the church missions. Although little is known about what life was like or what Aborigines were thinking about while they were living on pastoral properties as employees during the 1950s, some idea is available through the patrol reports provided by Walter McDougall. MacDougall was the Maralinga patrol officer, who made written reports on what he saw in the fifteen years from 1950 to 1965.

When MacDougall first began his patrols in late 1948, he was able to observe that 173 Aborigines of full- and mixed-descent were living on four cattle properties adjacent to the North West Aboriginal Reserve. A description of the living conditions formed part of the reports which he submitted both to the Weapons Research Establishment and the Protection Board. For example, in 1951 MacDougall was able to write about the desert area and the Aboriginal reserves, saying that many of the living or camping sites appeared abandoned and unused [and], in fact the country crossed from the northwest corner of the Commonwealth Hill boundary fence to the southern boundary of the Central Reserves showed no sign of occupation.

2.Ibid., p.5.
3.For an excellent coverage of Koonibba Aborigines and their participation of the rural workforce, see, Faull, 'Life On The Edge', op.cit. pp.313-342.
4.APB, Protector's Reports On Finnis Spring in Mortlock Library SA. Acknowledgement is provided here to Dr Bruce Shaw who provided me with copies of extracts of Finnis Springs Records from the Protectors' reports from 1978-1971 which he obtained from the Mortlock Library.
5.Memo: Director Works LRWE in SA wrote to Director-General of DOS re employment of Native Patrol Officer on 7.4.1947, in 'Maralinga Documents', op.cit., Vol., 1, pp.46-47.
On the mobility of Aborigines in the region he observed [that], at Coober Pedy we found approx 100 people from Ooldea, 20 from Port Augusta and Port Lincoln, and a few who spent most of their time there. Those from Ooldea travelled by train to Malbooma and then by truck, or foot, through the Stations to Coober Pedy. Some travelled all the way on camels but followed the same route.

The migratory route through the cattle and sheep properties was becoming more difficult, as MacDougall indicated in June of 1952 that the aborigines have now no right of free access to water supplies on pastoral country. Any movement or activity on stock country...is by permission of the manager.... There are considerable numbers who make the Reserve at Ooldea their base. They frequent the East-West Railway line West of Ooldea and as far East as Tarcoola.{sic}

MacDougall was alluding to the legislative changes made to the pastoral leases Act.

The cattle properties presented a slightly different picture of daily life, when, in 1953, MacDougall made the following comment regarding the arid zone pastoral properties when he wrote that the following cattle stations are situated in this area - Everard Park, Wallatinna and part of Granite Downs. Everard Park is owned by Messrs Josland and Ponder - James Sandy and Bruce Ponder and David Josland. They employ one white man Mick Mitselberg as cook, gardener and general help, also a varying number of Jangkuntjara. There are 71 aborigines based at this station,...Granite Downs is owned by J.Davies Esq., who employs a Manager, Bookkeeper, Station Mechanic, Head Stockman... A number of aborigines are employed, 67 making Granite Downs their head­quarters....Wallatinna is owned by Mr. Tom Cullenan, he employs only aborigines. 34 live at the homestead.{sic}

1. See tapes from 'Briscoe Tapes', ANL Series No. 2603/1-2603/30.
MacDougall goes on to discuss his own estimate of Aborigines using the arid zone area beyond the cattle and sheep properties, the length of time people had been occupying the area westward of the pastoral properties which he puts at 130, the types of ceremonies still practised, and the mode of transport.

In a 1954 report MacDougall wrote that he

[met the] Chief Protector [Mr Bartlett]; Professor Cleland, Dept. Chairman of Aborigines Protection Board and Sister McKenzie, Welfare Officer Copley. A thorough investigation of possible ways and means of improving the standard of living of coloured people, particularly those of several generations with settled way of life....{sic}

In the same report, mention was made of a visit to Finniss Springs in which the position between the Aboriginal residents and the land owner was becoming impossible. Negotiations had broken down between the United Aborigines Mission and the owner of the property, Mr Warren, for the Church to purchase the lease and create a new mission and training centre. The upshot of the breakdown in the purchase negotiations were that the Aboriginal cattle station community had become victims of neglect by both Warren and the Church.

The problem relating to Aborigines living on cattle properties in 1954 was not confined to Finniss Springs. The problem was that the use of Aboriginal labour in the 1950s was coming to an end and that was to be a painful process for Aboriginal labour and property owners alike. The property owners saw the problem as an Aboriginal problem rather than a problem relating to the conditions of labour.

Some appreciation of this problem is possible when considered in terms of the conditions of labour during the decade 1955-65. First, Aboriginal employment was a mosaic of casual labour; second, station employment was seasonal and males spent some time away from small town camps along the railway lines;


1. MacDougall, Report of patrol by W.B. MacDougall NPO Woomera and Mr Beadell, in Briscoe, Ibid., Cat. 6, p.3.

2. MacDougall, Detailed Survey Of The Junkantjara{sic} Tribe - Their Traditional Tribal And Ceremonial Grounds, Briscoe, Ibid., Cat., 6, p.2.
third, labourers who worked for owners of cattle and sheep stations were usually paid their wages in lump sums; fourth, the wives who travelled with their husbands were used as domestic labour or camp cooks.

In 1955 the cattle and sheep industries employed most Aboriginal labour in the area from Ceduna to Port Augusta and north to Oodnadatta. As mentioned above, it is difficult to say exactly what proportion of the Aboriginal male and female population worked in the two industries. It is equally difficult to indicate what proportion would move westwards to collect dingo scalps in the off-season of shearing and cattle mustering and eastwards to take casual labour on fencing, fence stump-cutting and to be employment on the railway. Some light was nevertheless thrown on the subject by Fay Gale when in 1964 she indicated that

the type of employment available to Part-Aborigines today depends largely upon the area in which they are living. A study of employment shows strong regional patterns. In the northern part of the State the pastoral industry is the only significant employer except the Commonwealth Railway and a few mining enterprises (e.g.,
Leigh Creek, Andamooka and [Coober Pedy]). Seasonal in character the pastoral industry provided little in the way of future long term employment and wages were low. For example, Fay Gale’s assessment was that

within the cattle country conditions vary from station to station. There is no award to cover Part-Aboriginal labour ...and...[the] wage received...is a one sided bargain. There are more full bloods in this...country than either mixed bloods or white. On the whole the mixed bloods are classed in with the full bloods and considered ‘primitive’...They are usually paid only a small money wage.

The difference between the cattle and sheep industry was the way they treated the Aboriginal stock-workers employed in the two industries.

Some of the differences were explained at a conference conducted by the Aborigines Advancement League of South Australia

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2. Ibid., pp.286-287.
Plate 7

photo of camps

Plate 8

Stockmen

The drovers take a breather on the rails of the forcing yard.

on 9 October 1965 in Adelaide. The Ernabella people were employed under the following categories and conditions, and according to Dr Charles Duguid they were that

the women [were] shepherds, spinners, craft workers, teacher aids, nursing aids and house helpers. Shearers get 9 pence a sheep plus rations; cattlemen £6[*]a month plus rations, clothing and £2 per week cash while on muster.

Shepherds, husband and wife work together. With the younger children, they live at the sheep camps, of which there are a great numbers, with between 500 and 700 sheep in each. For a period of eight weeks, each is paid £25 in cash value, with a bonus of 3 shillings to £2. (*£=pound sign)

Another report, which requires extensive quotation, indicated that

the employment offered is shearing, station work, seasonal work and contract work such as fencing or clearing land. The relevant award is the Federal Pastoral Industry Award, and it covers shearers and station hands. All shearers are union members. Shearing is a traditional occupation in some Aboriginal families, and Aboriginal shearers are union members who come under the award.

The position as regards station hands is less straightforward. There is a clause (3,d.) which excludes 'Aborigines' in connection with this award, is taken to mean full-blood Aborigines. I found only one pastoral company in this area [that is, north of Marree] which had...[five] full-bloods...in permanent employment as station-hands...

The 'basic wage' is the lowest wage that can be paid when an award is being made. But where there is no award, there is no legal minimum wage. At present the basic wage is £15.8.0, with a deduction for keep. I was given particulars, by employers, concerning the wages of 32 men (Aborigines) in permanent employment in the cattle industry in the North-East pastoral area. They were all stockmen of various kinds. Only 3 of these men received the basic wage, and half of them get approximately half the basic wage.

1. Aborigines Advancement League Of South Australia, Wages & Employment Of Aborigines in S.A., Proceedings of a seminar held on 9th October 1965, Copies obtainable from the Publishing Officer: Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide, pp.1-11, quote is from pp. 4-5.
2. Ibid., pp.5-6.
The report goes on to explain that, in the far-north west corner of the cattle region, there are a greater number of people of full-Aboriginal descent and their wages were the lowest in the labourforce. In addition, the report said that families travelled as far south as Oodnadatta, Coober Pedy and Port Augusta for work but that ‘...[such groups were] not as yet ready to adopt steady work habits....’

Although the report covered labourforce conditions at the end of the period of the Playford premiership, it is clear that the postwar prosperity was passed on only in the form of increases in the 'basic wage'. In many cases the pastoralists would pass on their prosperity only if the law compelled them to do so. The trade union office in Port Augusta, as indicated in the report, was too far away to monitor all workers, and in any event Aborigines on missions were beyond the influences of the Australian Workers Union. Many Aborigines were also working under conditions not covered by the law and under these circumstances employers preferred not to discriminate in their favour. Reports by MacDougall in the 1950s, and Faye Gale and the Aborigines Advancement League helped to compile a perspective of Aboriginal labour during the period of study. It should be remembered that the majority of the workforce in the cattle industry of the region were Aborigines and that they were not provided with the increases in prosperity enjoyed by the pastoralists. As a result the poverty and poor living conditions experienced by fringe-camp dwellers were a socially defined condition that the South Australian State Labour government was forced to deal with after it gained office in 1965.

From the turn of the century to the mid-1960s the pastoralists had monopolised the economic, political and cultural activities of the region. Two factors helped the pastoralists maintain their dominant relations over other groups in the region. One was the postwar economic boom; the other was the close relations developed between pastoralists, government and with stock and station agents all of whom profited from the grain, sheep and cattle production by the pastoralists. But, when Playford was defeated in 1965 the State Labor Party under Walsh and then Dunstan set in motion policies to reduce the power and influence of the pastoralists by bringing government closer to the region.

The pastoralists in a self-defeating process nevertheless failed to pass on or improve the living circumstances and wages of the labourforce of the region. As a result, the labourforce remained poor. Their poverty encouraged them to create a new culture identifiable by the customs used to cope with fringe-camp life. In addition, their poverty encouraged them to continue to migrate first to the fringes of the service towns and then later to the urban industrial centres.
Chapter 4

Institutionalisation: mining and railway towns, and pastoral and Aboriginal communities as institutions

4.1. Introduction

This chapter inquires into two types of social process: the effects of institutionalisation on people who lived in large towns and its effects on people who lived in small towns. The initial discussion of institutionalisation is followed by an investigation of alienation in the larger towns, mainly the mining centres of Whyalla, Leigh Creek, Coober Pedy; then a comparison is drawn between the large towns and those like Marree, Cook, Amata, Fregon and Ernabella. The primary source material was collected as part of the research for this thesis; the secondary source material is drawn from previous studies carried out in Whyalla. The hypothesis in this chapter is that the institutionalising processes reported by Kriegler in his study, Working For The Company, are also present in small railway towns and Aboriginal institutions in the region.

Erving Goffman’s study of ‘total institutions’ begins with the position that

a basic social arrangement in modern society is that the individual tends to sleep, play, and work in different places, with different co-participants, under different authorities, and without an over-all rational plan.

Furthermore, Goffman’s paradigm of institutionalisation suggests that people embrace change as well as inertia as a means of rendering their lives more predictable. This model appears to substantiate the hypothesis that small towns can be as alienating as large ones. The evidence presented here may suffer from its fragmentary nature. That is, it drew from Kriegler’s Whyalla study, as well as from new data for isolated communities in the same region of study. While it does not prove that small communities are as alienating as Whyalla it does suggest a parallel. The proof of this statement can only be achieved by further study which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

One purpose of this study was to observe the way people of a number of racial groupings were able to deal with the chaos of their changing circumstances. These groupings are considered

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as parts of institutional structures such as small towns, communities and businesses. The 'institution' is understood to denote rational behaviour, and organisation, which contain or impose order or control upon people. The term 'institution', to Erving Goffman, meant

an environment in which a large number of like-situated individuals reside, cut off from wider society and subject to a common regime often for the purpose of affecting a transformation in their identity.

Goffman demonstrated that an alienating process was common to many institutions in which there was a 'stripping away' of many of the social and cultural supports of people's identity through dress, limitations on possessions, appearance, strict timetables and activities and subjection of the inmates to controls by the staff of the institution.

In addition, the term 'institutionalisation' embodies a process. Goffman defines the process as one in which people [could] embrace change[;] they also strive to render their environment relatively predictable and permanent. [That is they become conditioned to a particular way of doing things on a customary basis]. This development of social habits or highly recognised patterns of behaviour changing little over the course of time, and valued intrinsically, is what is now commonly understood by institutionalisation.

Institutionalisation produces isolation, which is a criterion of 'alienation', a term employed by many religious and social theorists from John Calvin to Karl Marx.

Calvin, the religious radical, used the term 'alienation' as a means of identifying a process whereby religious persons could be cut-off from God. Alternatively, Karl Marx, the political radical, used the term in a more worldly fashion to signify people's cutting-off of themselves from their own 'sense of

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2.Ibid., pp.399-400.
being’. Institutionalisation is an important criterion of isolation, which embodies the concept of transformation from ‘Gemeinschaft’ to its antithesis ‘Gesellschaft’, or the way people cope with modern society’s demand for rational behaviour.

4.1.1. Institutionalisation

If Adam Smith believed, with Marx, that ‘...the job makes the person...’ then he might well have seen the sense in the idea that ‘...it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being [that] determines their consciousness...’ Urban habitats affected peoples’ lives because of either their residence or the main activities of the towns, e.g., mining, pastoralism, transportation and race policies. It is intended to gain some impression, from a few selected examples, of how people were coping with the transition from traditionalism to modernism or a transformation from ‘Gemeinschaft’ to ‘Gesellschaft’.

4.2. Industrial institutionalisation: Whyalla, Leigh Creek and Coober Pedy

Although mining industries have formed a considerable portion of the region’s past, mining has been confined to either the Flinders Ranges, Kingoonya, Coober Pedy and, from the mid-1930s and 1940s, Iron Knob and Leigh Creek. As shown earlier, the pastoral industry had monopolised the productive, employment and revenue earning capacity of the region. The mining of iron ore at Iron Knob and the establishment of the electricity power station at Port Augusta in 1952 had both direct and indirect influence upon the region.

Industrial mining development had various direct effects. First, it was the cause of the rapid population increases in the region from the 1930s to the late-1950s; second, it provided an attraction for Aboriginal labour to migrate to industrial

centres; third, it exacerbated the phenomenon of institutionalised towns - Whyalla, Leigh Creek and Coober Pedy. Iron ore mining had already attracted populations to Iron Knob and to Whyalla which had already grown into a large industrial centre with a population of 29,774 by 1950. The total population of the region rose from 29,774 in 1950 to 71,224 in 1976, while the Aboriginal population rose from 1,121 to 4,014 (which included both an estimated total number of full- and mixed-descent peoples, flowing from the enumeration problems mentioned earlier). The overall population, including many people of mixed-descent, rose to 41,450 in the 34 census years from 1947 to 1981 while the estimated Aboriginal population rose by 4,299.

In the early 1950s Leigh Creek was only slightly more than a railway siding for loading sheep from surrounding properties. Gradually, however, the brown coal deposits located near the siding itself grew in importance due mainly to a series of industrial stoppages on the New South Wales coalfields in 1949. The stoppages prompted Playford to use new technology from Victoria in producing electricity for the Electricity Trust of South Australia. Leigh Creek began coal production in 1944 but the deposits were used first as a mix with New South Wales coal and, after the building of the Port Augusta power station, 'briquettes' were used for power production. So far as the mining, smelting and export of minerals was concerned, Port Augusta was strategically placed between Adelaide and Leigh Creek as a power production centre. Drawing from this power source, the Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd company's smelting and ship building facilities at Port Pirie and Whyalla were advantageously located.

Whyalla, operated by the the Broken Hill Company (referred to hereafter as the Company), served as a dispatch point for iron ore from Iron Knob and a ship building facility. It also smelted the iron ore using coal from the Company mines on the eastern seaboard. In the early 1950s some 2.5 million tonnes (see Table 16 page 96 below) of pig iron had been produced and in 1956-57,

1. See population figures in Chapter 2, Table 2, p.37, above.
3,541 tonnes of steel. Although many of the largest vessels were built for the Company, many of the smaller ones, such as small naval craft of 682 tonnes, were built on Government contracts. Port Pirie and Whyalla were directly opposite one another on the Gulf and the latter was some 90 kilometres from Port Augusta. Whyalla was the dispatch and smelting point for Broken Hill silver lead and zinc. The Electricity Trust’s facility at Port Augusta and the location of cheap brown coal from Leigh Creek thus benefited the Company and the South Australian public.

Iron Knob, about 40 kilometres west of Whyalla, commenced iron ore extraction in 1915 and was the most important mining project in terms of the tonnage of ore produced. The above figures give some idea of the growing importance of mining in the region as shown by the amounts of coal and iron ore extracted since 1950. These figures show clearly the increased production and they also reflect Playford’s economic development ideology.

### Table 16

**Coal and iron ore production, South Australia: 1950 to 1979**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Coal in '000 tonnes</th>
<th>Iron ore in '000 tonnes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>2,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>3,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>3,437*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>2,048</td>
<td>4,392*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>1,856</td>
<td>7,584*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1,759</td>
<td>5,447*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1,674</td>
<td>4,479*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source for coal production: 6
Source for iron ore production: 7
Source: * for years 1960 to 1979.

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1. Thompson, Ibid., p.205.
2. Ibid., ff.
3. Ibid., ff.
4. Ibid., p.16
The state Labor Party took power in 1965, under the leadership of Frank H. Walsh. Production of both iron ore and coal rose dramatically under Walsh’s leadership. When Don Dunstan became Premier in the late 1960s the production trends changed. For example, there had been a fall, in relative terms, in both coal (2,048 million tonnes in 1965 to 1,674 million tonnes in 1979) and iron ore production (4,392 million tonnes in 1965 to 4,479 million tonnes in 1979) since the mid-1960s. In part, this is attributable to the rise of Don Dunstan as Premier and the way in which he stamped his own style of policies and direction on government (which will be elaborated upon in chapters 5-6). In part also, the shift downwards reflects changes from electricity consumption to natural gas, which was piped from Innamincka in the north east of the state. The minerals which captured peoples’ imagination more than the coal and iron ore in the region, were precious gems and opals.

4.2.1. Small mining towns, opals, and alienation

Although some mining was taking place prior to the Second World War it was not till the late 1950s that a dramatic rise in the value of opal production occurred. For example, as shown in Table 17 (see page 96 below), in the ten years from 1950 to 1960, the value of opal mining rose from A$107,662 to A$1,195,104, which is an average annual increase of 27 per cent. In the next decade and a half there was a recurrence of the same phenomenon, as Table 17 reflects.

Playford, who was interested in promoting industrial development at the head of Spencer Gulf and in Adelaide, was not able to take full advantage of the importance of opals as a revenue earner. Unlike the southern areas of the state in 1950, many of the towns were governed from Adelaide, which meant that they were without any form of local government. Mining licenses consequently had to be arranged from Adelaide and as a result


Table 17
The Value of Opals: 1950 to 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>The Value of Opals expressed in Pounds Sterling and A$ Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pounds Sterling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>107,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>130,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>143,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1,195,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>60,374,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>15,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>42,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>44,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Note: £1 = A$2.00.

opal mining developed of its own volition. Few controls existed over whether miners had the right simply to abandon a lease whenever they felt the need to do so.

In one sense, it was the freedom implied by the absence of local and state authority which brought immigrants to the area. The lack of a higher authority enabled the miners to control their own way of living and of operating their mining ventures. The two main fields in the area had been worked for some time and the working habits and general lifestyle remained undisturbed. For example, the extraction of opals from places such as Coober Pedy since 1915, and 1930 in Andamooka, was from relatively exposed cretaceous strata.

Two important gauges of cultural and industrial developments had evolved as a result of the peculiar soil types of the region. Firstly, was the custom of building houses underground in abandoned mine sites. A number of groups were attracted to the

Plate 9

photo of Coober Pedy opal mines

Plate 10

photo of Aborigines trading opals

Coober Pedy opal fields. As one observer has indicated,

...many of the miners in Coober Pedy at the time, [1965 to 1967], were of Greek origin. There were [,however,] Italians, Yugoslavs, a few Germans and of course some [Aboriginals]. The idea of mining at the time was to strike it rich, and...a few...miners were incredibly lucky getting millions of dollars worth of opal in just a matter of a few 1 months.

Many miners, however, remained poor, adding to another feature of Coober Pedy. Also, most miners were either single males or without their families. These features attracted prostitutes, some of whom were white but the majority were Aboriginal. During the period 1966-67 Archie Kalokerinos observed that

most of the [Greek] miners were obsessed with sex, in fact, there was only two subjects on which these miners would agree, ...the first was opal, the second was sex.

Although Kalokerinos was the only trained medical practitioner at Coober Pedy he did not practise medicine. He first arrived in 1965 and it appeared to him that there was an epidemic of venereal disease

within a few days of arriving....I would finish work and sitting down to an evening meal with my partners and [there] would be three, sometimes four, miners come with 3 acute gonorrhea.

The incidence of venereal disease was high and was coming from two sources.

First of all it came from white prostitutes....[A] second source of gonorrhea...[was] from the Aboriginal girls and... women. In fact almost every time that a white miner, of a group of miners had sexual contact with Aboriginal females 4 this would be followed by a bout of gonorrhea.

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2.Ibid., ff.
3.Ibid., ff.
These observations were not supported by the Aborigines Protection Board reports. It was not surprising that the generally poor health of Aborigines was not reported by the Protection Board in any comprehensive way because it was in the Board’s interest to disguise the health problems in its reports to state parliament.

Secondly, the industrial development of importance was the method of mining developed by local miners. The use of locally designed machines called ‘worms’ enabled miners to slice through the clay shales free of major obstructions. What grew as family-type businesses or as secondary investments for urban migrant workers (in this case particularly Greek male migrants) were transformed into private businesses. Some of the miners became wealthy. Luck, however, played an important part in the selection of a lease where opals could be found. The major reason for the unpredictability of opal mining was the problem of knowing exactly where the precious ore was located and under what geological formations it might exist.

In another sense, the opal fields had attracted an itinerant Aboriginal population who fossicked in the tailings left by other miners. For example, in the 1950s, Aboriginal groups from as far south as Port Augusta, and even Ceduna, would travel to Coober Pedy and Andamooka, following a short period of working in the pastoral industry. Some individuals like Chris Larking or groups like the Bartons from Port Augusta would come from towns along the railway line, to either Coober Pedy or Andamooka during periods of unemployment, or whenever they were on holidays from more permanent employment. Many more Aborigines would leave their children at Church homes at Oodnadatta, Quorn, Koonibba, Ooldea and Port Augusta while they went to fossick for opals. At times the Aboriginal groups would migrate to the opal fields and swell the population to upwards of 200 Aborigines.

There were tuberculosis screening campaigns in the region from 1950 to later in the decade. The reports only make mention of general health problems and delivery.

On the surface it would appear that ceremonial migration was motivating large numbers of Aborigines. In some instances that was true but, in others, it was the lure of the opals and the excitement of instant wealth. Large numbers of Aborigines would migrate to opal towns at certain times of the year. They did so to supplement their seasonal incomes as pastoral workers with incomes from fossicking. For part of the year they worked in the pastoral industry and for the rest of the year they fossicked for opals. Sometimes they decided to adopt totally the new mining town or fringe-camp culture. Fossicking helped Aborigines adapt to new circumstances, not only because it motivated people to move from the missions and the pastoral properties but also to migrate between mining and railway towns. The important question, therefore, was whether any similarities existed between these institutions, for instance in their economic, religious and political influences upon people.

4.2.2. Industrial towns: Whyalla, Leigh Creek and Coober Pedy: 1950 to 1979;

Whyalla differed from Leigh Creek and Coober Pedy. A background to its development is now needed, followed by a discussion of the way the residents of the town struggled to free themselves from social and political dominance by the Company.

Whyalla began smelting iron ore from Iron Knob in the late-1930s, and before the Second World War it had been an isolated industrial village administered as an arm of the company. But what was most significant after the war was that the insular pre-war community drawn from the rural districts in South Australia's mid-north and Eyre Peninsular by the prospect of steady, well paid employment after years of economic depression had to accommodate thousands of newcomers.


2. Ibid., p.9.
Plate 11

photo of Whyalla

(a) Australia's largest and most modern shipbuilding yard, Whyalla, South Australia.

Source: Best, op.cit., Plate 23(a).
Plate 12

Port Augusta power station

(a) S.A. Electricity Trust's powerhouse "A" at Port Augusta, burning Leigh Creek Coal.  

Photograph: Electricity Trust of S.A.

Source: Best, op.cit., Plate 21 (a).
Plate 13

photos of Leigh Creek

(b) Leigh Creek open-cut coal mine supplies sub-bituminous coal for much of South Australia's power requirements.

*Photograph:* Electricity Trust of S.A.

Whyalla, nevertheless, remained a company town in the immediate post-war years but, as explained below, the Company had a declining role in the town management, or local government, from the early 1960s. Writing as late as the 1970s, Roy J. Kriegler could still point out that the first thing one noticed in Whyalla were the huge steel works and shipyard which dominate the whole landscape. Company and geographical domination was not merely physical. The aura of both permeated the thinking of the city, as the pollution permeated the air residents and tourists breathed. One worker epitomised the kind of phenomenon Kriegler was alluding to when he claimed he didn’t belong in such a town. He said he was there because he was an old man, and that was all. The Company had a controlling interest in everything in this town - the newspaper, the radio station, the doctors, libraries, even the Workers Club.

Migrants to the town as well as managers were also unable to escape the feelings of isolation and domination by the company in Whyalla. The problem faced by recently arrived Europeans was the same as that faced by long-time residents, as indicated above.

Kriegler’s book elucidates ‘...the milieu of the factory worker,... work and factory life through the eyes and experiences of the worker[s themselves]....’ Kriegler worked at the Broken Hill factory in Whyalla and collected oral evidence from the people he worked with, as well as from middle and senior management. He found that even the modern industrial worker participated in only a few decisions concerning the production process or nature of the work done. All the key production decisions were made by the managers. Workers were given no say over the growth of the industry or the distribution or the prices of the products they made.

4.2.3. Whyalla, 1960 to 1979

Whyalla society took two decades to free itself from the dominance of the Company. 'Throughout the 1950s to the 1960s,...'
according to Kriegler, Whyalla experienced a gradual withdrawal of company dominance, and ‘...the company’s formal role in the town diminished as state government authorities took over the essential services....’ The process of devolving social and governmental powers from the Company to the town residents was different in Whyalla to what it was in small towns such as Marree, or Cook, which never entertained any prospects of becoming independent. When the railway left, as in the case of Marree, the continuing contradiction was the survival of the town itself and not just the isolation of the residents who were to stay. As Kriegler concludes, Whyalla steel workers felt trapped because the town lacked character, charm and a traditional neighbourliness. At work they felt encapsulated in an industrial environment with no sense of human dignity or involvement in the job.

Two events tend to show that social developments present a different perspective from the idea that the workplace made the workers. It is equally possible to add that the workers made the town. Firstly, development of a town council structure indicates a growing level of involvement by residents. Secondly, the expansion of the town meant that the alienating properties suggested by Kriegler could be offset by an increase in the diversity of Whyalla society.

It is true to say that the Company was reluctant to encourage a merging of town life with the Company’s role as profit-maker and steel producer. But, as one traveller mentioned, it was the starkness of Whyalla’s location and the company’s dominance in which for him, Whyalla emerged from the flat plains, shaping the horizon with the tall cylindrical structures of the Company’s blast furnaces and giant cranes of the shipyards.

All the same, Whyalla itself was being described in travel literature as having ‘...streets of pleasant brick and stone houses...’ and, apart from a number of shopping centres, modern hotels, picture cinemas, new school buildings a large hospital and dairy just outside the town with lush pastures. One of the problems which Whyalla possessed, in terms of its democratic developments, was its qualification either as an area of local development.

2.Ibid., p.6.
3.Ibid., p.286.
government or as a city, as understood under the 1934-1964 Local Government Act. Even by 1961, the population had only just reached 10,000, which was adequate for city status. The city’s small size made the criticism by the local Labor Party Legislative Assembly member (Ron Loveday) appear unfair. Although the Company had representation on the ‘...uncommon form of local government...’ the Commission catered for ratepayers through the inclusion of three appointed Whyalla residents as members of the Commission. In his reports to Parliament between 1952 and 1955, the Director of Mines, Mr. Dickinson, emphasised the continuity of Whyalla and the development of a steel works. Even as early as 1956 an attempt was made by the Country Women’s Association to develop a form of opposition to the Labor Party which had monopolised state parliamentary representation. In some respects this development provided the impetus for the growth of a local government institutions which would become more substantial than a local advisory body to the Company. Loveday indicated that beside the need for a local authority where ratepayers could participate in local decisions, Whyalla was becoming more cosmopolitan due to the increasing population and the 27 nationalities in the town. Loveday’s criticism was valid in that the Company appointed the ratepayers who sat on the Commission until the late-1960s. In 1970, full local government status was granted.

Of interest to residents was that, by 1965, the long awaited steel plant was completed with further additions in 1966, but the important development was two recreation parks, as one writer indicated that

nearby is Whyalla Conservation Park preserved as a representative area of the region’s natural vegetation and wildlife. Also nearby lies Lincoln Park Historic Reserve,

1.Rogers, Ibid., p.35.
3.‘Whyalla’s New Hall Is Open’, in The South Australian Countrywomen, Adelaide Friday, November, 30, 1956, p.1. Gradually, during the period from 1961 to 1979 not only did greater political reform reduce the alienating properties of the ‘company town’ but also general expansion and recreation facilities humanised the social habitat for Whyalla residents.
Plate 14

photo of Cook School

All pictures on this page were taken during an inspection tour by the Teachers' Salaries Board.

The inspections were made late last month and formed part of proceedings in the hearing of SAIT's application for Locality Allowances.

which has a variety of Aboriginal motifs painted in different colours on rock.

While it was true to say that company towns like Whyalla may be described as places where alienation existed it is possible to say that the phenomenon may have been diminished over time as residents took the necessary action to free themselves from such processes. The people of Whyalla gradually asserted their demand to represent their own interests over and above the interests of the company from the late 1960s and early 1970s. Was the process of alienation similar in small communities like Leigh Creek and Cook, or was it a phenomenon applicable only to large company-owned urban complexes?

4.2.4. Leigh Creek and Cook

Leigh Creek, like Whyalla and Cook, was a company town in that the Electricity Trust of South Australia owned the mine and, apart from the surrounding sheep properties, everything revolved around the coal mine. Although the mine had been in partial operation since the late nineteenth century, and it has been said that Aborigines knew of the combustible shale, it was Playford's personal interest, and the industrial strikes in the 1948-9, which persuaded him to break the state's dependence on outside coal resources. In 1950 Leigh Creek had a population of approximately 223, and by 1954 the number had risen to approximately 630.

Serious extraction of coal began in 1952, with plans for a new direct rail linkage to Port Augusta and a dam to service a burgeoning industrial company town. From the 1954 to the 1976 census the population increased from 630 to 999. This increase together with the coal production forced the Electricity Trust to build a new township and to remove the people from the old town to the newly constructed township. The reason for the move was to free the underlying coal deposits to open-cut extractions. Relocation to the new town, the construction of which began in 1977, was completed in 1981. This event created two major social

Acknowledgment:
3. Ibid., ff.
4. Ibid., ff.
5. Ibid., ff.
problems. The first was a great influx of new building contractors and their families. The second was the obligatory movement of Electricity Trust employees to new suburbs.

An important event at Leigh Creek in the late 1970s symbolised the different types of alienation processes. Andrew Joy, a school teacher, who came directly from teachers’ college to the school at Copley, a small railway siding swallowed up by urban development around Leigh Creek. Joy, who transferred from Adelaide, related his first reaction to the news of his appointment and ultimate move to Leigh Creek. First of all, when he first heard of his appointment he was surprised that he had been appointed to Leigh Creek. It was his second trip into the area. His first had been in 1976, when he had first experienced rough Australian dirt roads. That was one aspect which highlighted the isolation of the place. After about four and a half hours to get to Hawker he still had another two hours before reaching Leigh Creek.

Driving up along that road there were only a couple of places to stop - Parachilna and Beltana. It was a good experience to come into civilisation at Leigh Creek. In 1977 Joy moved to Leigh Creek and his first impressions were favourable. He was accommodated in a comfortable house and the working conditions were fairly good. There were no problems teaching the kids, with whom he enjoyed associating. The town residents were fairly stable for the first year, but when the Trust decided to build the new town 15 kilometres south, a large influx of itinerant workers’ families provided a new set of circumstances.

The arrival of contract workers, according to Joy, triggered problems at the school. For example, in the remote country areas first year teachers were generally sent to manage the schools. While they did not have experience, they had lots of enthusiasm. It made things hard for the new country teacher because of the changing aspect of social life. With the new contractors moving into town further changes were not welcomed by the old residents. They decided to go as the new people poured into to Leigh Creek. The major problem was the single men’s quarters. The living quarters provided by the Trust meant that after working hours the young men caused problems for the ‘old residents’, in particular those with female children. The girls were attracted to the local hotels where the men congregated. A number of girls including some still at school, became involved with the new arrivals. An additional problem was the drinking.

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2. Ibid., ff.
Joy remembered going to cabarets at Leigh Creek where even 12 and 13 year old children became drunk along with the adults.

In Leigh Creek, as in Whyalla, the company made itself responsible for almost every event which occurred. Most events had on-going effects. When the company made a decision to re-locate the old town it set up a chain of events which reverberated throughout the whole community. Was the same phenomenon of alienation occurring, perhaps for other reasons, in places like cattle properties and other small government and church institutions?

4.3. Rural institutionalisation: Aboriginal communities

Industrialisation in Whyalla, Leigh Creek and Coober Pedy incurred problems of alienation for many people who came to the region from other towns and countries. Were there similar problems associated with living in small communities in rural areas, and were there problems of alienation for people moving to these small institutions and for people who had lived there longer?

4.3.1. Aboriginal communities as institutions

Institutionalisation is not confined to large establishments or the industrial process. It affects many people in different ways. The cattle industry escaped neither change nor the making of profits through greater and greater organisation. Population drift affected labour requirements and life was made difficult by the absence of quality recreation. The organisation of small groups was not always easy.

Between 1950 and the 1970s Walter MacDougall observed the cattle industry at close quarters. He made reports to the range manager at Woomera on what Aborigines were doing and on cattle station life. The tendency, MacDougall remarked, was for the Yunguntjatjara to stay on the cattle properties where life is considerably easier. This was not so in August, September and October when these station workers spread over the country hunting dingo pups. Station owners and manager encouraged the fringe-camp groups to remain on the properties with the object of reducing the dingo population. MacDougall saw the process

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2. Gwyn Rogers, 'The Road To Leigh Creek', in Walkabout, March 1st, 1952.
...as a harvest when all can have a super abundance of white man's food just simply by collecting dingo pup scalps....' From the patrol officer's view-point the object may have been for the cattle station manager to control Aboriginal groups. From the Aboriginal point of view, life on cattle properties must have been easier than permanent life in the desert. This perspective helps to explains why people might have moved away from the desert for most of the year. Equally important, however, Aborigines opted for an institutional life selling dingo scalps and moving between missions and cattle properties rather than a freer life in harsher circumstances on traditional land. When they did move some moved directly to pastoral properties as casual labour.

MacDougall expressed this view of Aboriginal pastoral labour in a report, saying that

an obvious avenue of useful employment is the cattle, to which these aborigines(sic) are tremendous potential value. Even without the training necessary to change them from hunters to husband-men they make very useful stockmen for short periods, and many Station(sic) managers have agreed with me that, if properly trained, a large proportion would be second to none.

At the same time he saw growing pauperisation:

free food...resulted in sloth and loss of self-respect...It [was] also recommended that, as far as possible, only those employed and their...dependents (wives and children) be permitted on Station properties.{sic.}

By about 1955, according to MacDougall, large numbers of Aborigines lived on properties between the desert, the missions at Ernabella and Nepabunna (near Leigh Creek). The property owners did not always welcome Aborigines and these cattle and sheep lessees were pressuring the state Aborigines Protection Board to create special holding reserves. Life for Aborigines on cattle and sheep properties was highly unstable: on one hand was the harsh desert existence from which they had retreated; on the other was the pauperising fringe-camp life.

2. Ibid., p.412.
3. Ibid., p.413. 4. Ibid., ff.
Plate 15

photo of Max Brown from Port Augusta

Penny Taylor (ed.), After 200 Years, AIATSIS Pub., 1988
By the 1960s the circumstances had worsened for Aborigines in the cattle and sheep zones. In the western area Ooldea mission closed, and the casual labour force was dispersed to Yalata and Koonibba missions. In the north the sheep and cattle industries required less labour and there was pressure for pastoral communities to disperse thereby creating Aboriginal fringe populations. These fringe populations, for example at places such as Kingoonya, Tarcoola and Commonwealth Hill, were large even in 1955. According to MacDougall a total of 780 Aborigines made up of 278 males, 174 females and 328 children had camped just in these three towns. The Aboriginal pastoral population drifting from cattle properties began to exacerbate the overcrowding on the fringes of service centres like Marree and Finniss Springs.

Researching some of these communities in the 1960s, Fay Gale made some important observations. First, a measure of closeness existed between the Aboriginal people of full- and mixed-descent in terms of the retention of traditional knowledge and the acquisition of bush skills by people of mixed-descent. Second, people of mixed-descent were observing corroborees and initiation rites. Third, old forms of social organisation were continued by people of mixed descent from the north. In part, social change resulted because Aboriginal labour was becoming redundant due to technological changes like the introduction of motor cycles in place of horses. In part also, change was promoted by Aborigines themselves through migration from desert to cattle and sheep properties, and to various service towns, e.g., Marree, Oodnadatta, Finniss Springs, Nepabunna, Quorn, Tarcoola, Kingoonya and Ooldea.

It was from these locations that people were able to get seasonal work on the sheep and cattle properties. Fay Gale pointed out that

[a] survey was made of eight station properties in South Australia....It discovered that out of this number [23] - three stations employed Part-Aborigines full time as general hands. Twenty stations employed Part-Aborigines...

3 [part-time] as shear[ers].

Gale went on to say that the survey showed five 'part-Aborigines had contracts to transport cattle from Marree across

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2. Ibid., 'Population Kingoonya-Deakin Area', Vol.3., p.432.
to the Broken Hill line and then to Adelaide late in 1958. Gordon Coulthard, one of these Aboriginal pastoral workers, described what pastoral work was like when he said that

[from the mid-1960s] I moved on to a place called Wertaloona. The first droving trip...650 mixed cows and calves came from Kenmore Park. They were loaded up the other side of Oodnadatta...The cattle came down...by train to Farina near Marree and drove the cattle to Yunta on the Broken Hill line. They were store cattle [which]...is when they are starving and need fattenning. It took five men...two and a half months to drive the cattle...from Farina to Yunta. Two trains were loaded and I, and another drover fella, went with the cattle to Dry Creek near Adelaide.

A.W.Wilson owned the cattle and Elder Smiths was the stock agency.

Coulthard’s evidence supports the view that Aboriginal labour was migrating from missions, cattle properties and the fringe-camps, to the urban centres in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was also clear from the recollections of another Aboriginal pastoral worker, rabbit trapper and railway fettler, Ken McKenzie, what type of changes were occurring. He said,

At the age of thirteen I worked for fifty cents a day for a [p]oliceman at Blinman...I went and worked for Dad chopping posts for the contractors who wanted the posts. We lived at Blinman in a house...a good house in those days...a station owner Mr Farghar that Dad worked for gave us the house at no rent. I worked for two pound a week at Wooltanna...Balkanoona and Woorialpa and Wertaloona stations....I went rabbiting at Blinman...to help us to...buy food....My Dad and Uncle Stan 1957-58 and I were trappers. The droving was running out...I had a fall on a horse and came back rabbit trapping....I then came and worked for the Commonwealth Railways. First of all I came and got a job for Geddes...for a month...then Mum and Dad tracked me to Port Augusta...Then me and Dad went and got a job with the railway...fettling.

1.Gordon Couthard, in 'Briscoe tape', loc.cit., ANL Series, TRC 2603/5/1, 22.3.90.
The same migration process affected a pastoral training program at Musgrave Park, a cattle property established by the state government in 1961. James Vickery was the first manager the Aborigines Protection Board employed to establish the cattle project. The purpose was to train Aboriginal stockmen. The political reason for establishing Musgrave Park (or as it became known, Amata) was because of the Playford government's dissatisfaction with the progress being made by the Presbyterian missionaries at Ernabella. The Government's concern was that the missionaries were learning the language. That meant that Aborigines were not learning English. According to Vickery, this had the effect of imprisoning the Aborigines at Ernabella. Soon after the training program collapsed due to over-population and inward migration from other regions.

At the beginning of the project six Aboriginal males from Ernabella were originally assigned as trainees. Just three months after the project commenced the Aboriginal population had swollen to 300. By 1964 only 300 head of cattle had been brought to the project, and while this made the community self-sufficient in beef the training program had now been transformed into a welfare settlement. Vickery decided to move some of the families and old relatives of the Aboriginal stockmen to a camp 80 kilometres away. This action, Vickery claimed, was the beginning of the outstation movement, and he initiated the move in an attempt to stem the community's deteriorating health. Each week Vickery would visit the community taking with him rations and stores. The people paid for these stores from the proceeds of dingo scalp bounties or incomes received from the sale of artifacts.

Aborigines were not the only ones to feel the effects of small town alienation. By the 1970s numerous attempts had been made to reverse the institutionalising effect of the welfare station at Amata, redirecting its emphasis towards being a 

project operated as a private enterprise. It failed, however. A previous headmaster from Ernabella commented on the effects that Amata had upon a white worker he had known. The person (who will be referred to as 'a welfare worker') whom he met and who was still living in the northern reserve, came to Ernabella with his family in 1974 on his way to Amata. At that time he was employed by the state government as a social worker. Other staff at Ernabella saw him only a few times while the family settled in at the station and then followed a rapport which grew between them and Ernabella people.

The welfare worker travelled around the area extensively. He was invited to go out to Wingellena and to Pipalyatjara as the 'community advisor'. It appeared to be a highly successful relationship with some Aboriginal groups. As a white man, tensions concerning his identity began to develop for him at Pipalyatjara. The welfare worker developed strong anti-mission attitudes. In the opinion of the Fregon and Ernabella headmaster, Howard Groome, there were certain ambivalences displayed by the welfare worker in his dealings with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents on the mission:

He seemed to have a chip on his shoulder...against the Christians and white people....[The welfare worker] saw initiation [of himself as]...a way of rejecting his own society and all it stood for....He was frustrated about the management at Amata [which] was running on a 'public service model'....

The welfare worker was determined to appeal to the authority structure of the elderly Aborigines living at Amata. To do this he required a vehicle in which to travel extensively and to take the 'elders' wherever they needed to travel. This was not always possible, and that apparently aggravated him.

A typical response by people working in isolated places was that they expected to encounter less bureaucratic management. Despite the adverse effects on staff at Amata the bureaucratic procedures remained in place. The welfare worker, like others whose jobs brought them to the region, became frustrated with the power structure that he had to deal with. [This was] either with the? [Presbyterian Church at

2. Ibid., ff.
Ernabella]...or with the government [who managed Amata]. I would see John as being totally lost between two cultures.

It is difficult to know why the welfare worker cut his ties with the white community. Amata was itself different from other cattle properties because it was administered by the state government. It was not dependent on making profits to survive; all that the Adelaide-based public service required was the keeping of meticulous records. The above example illustrates one response of a person of different racial and cultural background being introduced to life in an institutionalised Aboriginal community.

4.3.2. Railway towns: Cook and Marree as institutional towns

A series of important questions arise as soon as we consider life in these remote towns. For instance, do all towns, whether large or small, share similar alienating characteristics? Are residents conditioned and defined by the towns in which they live, and do they become isolated from one another? Are small rural towns like Cook and Marree just as alienating as large individual towns like Whyalla and Leigh Creek? Not every one could move directly to urban centres such as Port Augusta. People who lived in institutional railway towns like Cook and Marree experienced the contradictions of small town life which persisted whether they were labourers working for the railway, itinerant Aboriginal persons living in fringe camps in Marree, or residents of similar railway towns in the region.

The railway town of Cook, which is located on the transcontinental railway line, is owned by the Australia National Railway (hereafter referred to as Australia National). The town population has remained at about 76. This number includes about 20 adult males, the same number of adult females, and the rest children. Managed by railway staff, Cook is a 'company' town. Apart from the school and hospital buildings, all buildings belong to Australia National. The town has always existed to service freight and passenger traffic between the eastern states and Perth. The station master is the most senior employee, but his authority is not necessarily accepted by all town residents. For example, some of the community's activity operated side by side with Australia National's bureaucracy.

1. Groome, Ibid., ff.
2. See 'Day Books' which account for the activities of the manager, staff and inmates on the property. Copies of 1962-3 record lodged in AIATSIS.
The hospital is an example of a non-railway activity conducted by a community organisation. Sister Gai Mee was the hospital administrator appointed to a service owned by the Bush Christian Society. Sister Mee came from Brisbane and spent some time in New Guinea after completing her nursing training. Soon after her return in the early 1980s she was appointed to the Cook hospital. She saw the hospital as more than catering for medical needs, in that

the hospital is operated by two nurses and [because]...they are recruited by the [Church] system they have a background in the Christian faith. The Bush Nursing Society is a Christian body which has historically 1 provided hospital services to rural peoples.

The hospital provided a source of comfort to individuals who from time to time sought medical, social and personal advice from the nursing staff. The institution also served as a church on some Sundays, a social centre for youth fellowship meetings and as a Bible study centre.

Life at Cook, therefore, centred around the railway, the hospital and the school. As the hospital administrator makes clear,

[Cook is]...a highly dependent community, partly because everyone works for Australia National...[excluding] the school and the hospital...[staff]. Australia National in their organisation create a bit of a dependency where there is always... someone to 'take-the-buck' and someone to give the orders. And that does come through into the community....There is always some [person] that they can rely on either at the hospital the school...[and] someone can provide for that dependency.

Cook, however, did provide a minimal amount of freedom for the community to act collectively and democratically.

The Simms family was a white family who came to Cook in 1965 from Adelaide. Murray Simms had previous work experience in isolated towns, but that was before he was married. He brought his family to Cook in the family motor vehicle. Their

1. Gai Mee (Cook Hospital Administrator), in 'Briscoe Tapes', ANL Series No., TRC, 2603/1/28.
2. Ibid., ff.
introduction to the town was eventful. When the car developed engine troubles 60 kilometres from town Simms walked that distance for help. In addition, Simms' wife was unhappy with the accommodation. After six months in the original house they found better accommodation.

Organising the new accommodation was a long process even though Simms' wife was disturbed when they saw the accommodation. '...[A]bout the first house...', Simms says, '...I never really had complaints as such about the housing....' The explanation changed, however, as time went by. As Simms recalls, with things like screen doors or broken windows or similar maintenance problems, 'You had to complain to have things fixed....' But to complain about the house would have brought a reaction from others because most people knew that they were unhappy with it.

When asked about whether the Union representative was informed Simms replied, 'No!...don't believe in that. That's bad news....' It was Simms' view that the Railway looked after him because the family was given a house at nominal rent. The idea of receiving poor accommodation was a matter of luck rather than the Company's obligation because everyone knew that the accommodation was bad. Simms had the view that it was his responsibility to arrange, ad hoc, his own comfort. He explained how his family came to get a new house:

The chap who was...here as a road master clerk, he was moving out. He was transferring out and he offered me his house. Australia National had nothing to do with the move. I went to the Station Master, Len Hickey, and he ok'd it and he said yes. I got on all right with...[Len Hickey].

Simms began life at Cook as a fettler in 1965. Fettling was then a manual task, in which all the sleepers had to be handled by one or two men. The Cook fettlers had 32 kilometres of track to maintain and every two days an inspection of the whole section was carried out. By 1972 heavy machinery was introduced and Simms switched from being a manual worker to a machine operator. This meant an increase in wages and a promotion to 'ganger'. As Simms' status as a worker improved so did his living standards.

Simms was grateful to the Australia National Railway and his

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1.Murray Kevin Simms, in 'Briscoe Tapes', ANL Series No., TRC, 2603 27/1/1.
2.Ibid., ff.
Spiking hammer at work

Tractor hauling rails off waggons into position for track laying

Plate 17

railway construction: bridge-building machine.

Source: Ibid., p.17
loyalties remained with him even when his own interests were in jeopardy. Even as a union member he feared calling the Union in because he saw it as a threat to his security. He nevertheless exercised his freedom in other ways directly related to his childrens' interests. He was soon elected to the Cook school parent's committee and by 1973 to chairing the group. He recounted settling one big issue which reflected the nature of small town life. The Simms family consisted of '...four kids who were regarded as city kids...', and at first the other childrens were wary of them. It was not long, however, before the children found their level. Outside work Simms's main interests were his children and the school they attended.

Dick Sherwin was the headmaster. Sherwin encouraged Simms to become involved and he was elected. Simms explains, '...I hadn't really been involved before, it was an alien position...I don't know that I was such an important [person]....' The other committee members were helpful, but '...unless you were pretty strong the meeting would just deteriorate into a gossip session and there would be virtually nothing done....' There was a lot of gossip such as, 'The next door neighbour had an argument with the boss....' This was typical of the local conflict. In such a small town these problems would sometimes end up being expressed at the meetings.

The school committee and the whole town were united on the one issue, that was the building of the town swimming pool. 'It was a town decision...', Simms pointed out and, '...there had been a certain amount of money raised to...[support] our argument....' This money was raised by the parents, but, the initial response by the Education Department and the Railway was negative. The parents' committee were told by the Railway that the responsibility to fund the project fell on the parents of Cook. The pool issue had to be a joint effort between the school committee and the community. The committee offered to raise $5,000 to get the project off the ground. The response from Australia National and the Education Department was slow. When, however, the authorities capitulated the pool was constructed and used by all the town residents.

In one respect Simms displayed a number of dependent characteristics but in another respect his behaviour suggests that he was highly independent. On balance, however, he was ambivalent about the community, and after his children had left

2. Ibid., ff.
A camel buggy enters the township of Marree from the lonely vastness of the desert.

CAMEL TEAMS

Plate 19

Cook he withdrew from public life. One other fear was that he had no real tenure in Cook because when he retired he had to leave the town. This was common to all the workers as this town was where they had spent most of their married and working life. Being resident of a railway town, employees were forced to leave town when they retired regardless of the length of time they had lived there. The same conditions, however, did not apply to people living in Marree.

Marree had formerly been an important railway depot connecting the region with Queensland. In 1950 Marree was nothing more than a railway siding and service centre for the surrounding pastoral properties. Previously it had been a transport centre which saw hundreds of camel trains carrying wool to Adelaide and collecting large loads from the drainage areas of Lake Eyre.

From the late nineteenth century to the Second World War many Afghans working with camels had large 'harems' of Aboriginal women in the camel-watering locations. These watering-stops had their own special Aboriginal residents. The Afghans had formed sexual relations with the Aboriginal women in these camps. When they returned some time later, perhaps a year or more, they would see their offspring as infants running around the camp. Not all the cameleers, or their workers, abandoned their wives and children. Some cameleers married the Aboriginal women and took them back to the Afghan towns.

One such person, the daughter of an Afghan cameleer, Miriam Bede Khan, who came from Henbury cattle property in the Northern Territory to live at Marree with her Afghan father, Nemeth Khan, in 1929. She subsequently married Gool Mohomet in 1940, and in 1945 Dadleh, a railway fettler at Marree. While many people moved to Marree for work, Henry Cox was one of the few people born there. Henry worked at the railway marshalling line in the 1960s and later transferred to Cook as a train examiner. He also worked in the Marree area as a pastoral worker and a windmill fitter.

Other people, like Ray MacDonald, went to Marree from Port Augusta. He became superintendent of the Marree railway and freight yard. He returned in the 1970s to a position controlling

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2.Ibid., p.15.
3.Ibid., p.16.
trains in Port Augusta. Some people were unable to leave in the same fashion as MacDonald had done.

What impression Marree made on people when they first arrived depended upon the purpose for which they had come. Anne Scheppers recalls her first impressions after arriving from Adelaide on the Ghan with her two children. It was dark the night she arrived in 1968. Next morning, however, when she looked out the window her first impression was of '...a vast barren space, no trees, emptiness and remoteness....' Despite first impressions, she '...got to really enjoy that environment....there was a terrific sense of isolation....'

Miriam Dadleh and Anne Scheppers saw Marree from different perspectives. For Miriam Dadleh, Marree had been her home since the late 1920s. Anne Scheppers saw Marree from the standpoint of a newly arrived teacher. Initially Anne appreciated the vastness and the sense of isolation. As she came to know and understand the Aboriginal population, she developed an awareness of the alienating characteristics of the town and its institutions - the hotel and the pastoral properties encircling the town. She was conscious of the divisive effect the Marree environment had on the whole community. Whites ran the hotel, the stores and the railway. Most Aborigines lived in a rundown reserve about half a kilometre out of town. There were some Aborigines living in railway houses. Afghan people lived in one particular section.

After working on the nearby cattle properties for a month or two, '...quite a few of the [Aboriginal] men would get dropped off outside the...[hotel] once every couple of months with a huge cheque which they’d cash....' The Aboriginal women might get some of the men's wages if they were lucky. For some of them, however, '...it meant periodically getting beaten up because the men who had this really lonely existence out on the [cattle] station would come in and get drunk and sometimes get more than a bit wild....' She observed Aboriginal men being dropped off outside the hotel and lots of drunken brawls between them and white hotel patrols. This would be followed by brawls with police when they were arresting the Aboriginal men.

According to Anne Scheppers the ones who suffered most were the Aboriginal women. They had to exist in poverty without their

2. Ibid., ff.
3. Ibid., ff.
husbands because the pastoralists refused to allow the Aboriginal men to be with their families. The Aboriginal women suffered once more when their male companions or husbands (some white and some were Aboriginal) came home to the fringe camps from mustering stock on the surrounding pastoral properties.

The starting point of this chapter was to inquire into Kriegler’s analysis the problem of alienation for Whyalla residents and workers. Large industrial communities such as Whyalla, Leigh Creek and Coober Pedy have many characteristics which are different from smaller towns and communities such as Cook, Marree and Amata, but striking similarities of institutionalisation occur. The idea that the habitat ‘...makes the people who live in them...' appear to be highly relevant to the evidence presented, however fragmentary that may have been. For example, in Whyalla the Broken Hill company provided the circumstances to alienate employees in a geographical, political and social sense. In Leigh Creek the Electricity Trust and the government at Amata, Cook and Marree reproduced the same conditions. Cattle stations, as observed by Walter MacDougall, were as alienating as life in urban areas. Cook was geographically isolated but institutionalisation provided the circumstances for peoples’ dependency. Cook’s residents nevertheless attempted to struggle against Railway indifference. Similarly, Marree with Aboriginal fringe dwellers, local pastoral labour and a town specialising in rail transport services, had parallel experiences. Institutionalisation, it is also suggested, affected people across racial barriers. In part, the alienation which Kriegler demonstrated helped to retain employees in industrial towns. In part also, it helped people decide to move to urban areas in the belief that their geographical and social isolation would disappear. Institutionalisation in large towns shaped people’s actions and mobility as it had done in small towns.

1.Kasper and Anne Scheppers, Ibid., ff.
Chapter 5

The transport revolution

5.1. Introduction

The transport revolution was important in modernising the region of study. The changes affected pastoralists through the subsidies they received. The term 'subsidy' is understood to mean pecuniary aid granted by parliament to secure, in the case of the pastoral industry, the reduction of export and transport costs. The changes affected the work patterns and lifestyles of railway workers. Also, the changes in transport imposed new kinds of social relations upon fringe-camp life. 'Social relations' is used to mean '...the nature of the economic roles permitted by the state of development of...the way the production of goods is done in society...and, further, relationships that exist[ed] between these roles....' The new customs created by Aborigines for fringe-camp life could sometimes be confused as part of traditional culture rather than as an adaptation to pastoral work and fringe-camp culture.

From its inception the railway system had been planned to link Adelaide with London rather than Oodnadatta or Marree. Politics had, from that time, been an important part of the transport operation and, by 1950, the distribution of political power was as important to maintaining rail subsidies as the transport system was in moving produce to markets outside the region. The social effects of the transport revolution form the second major topic of discussion which focuses on the relationships between people in two of the towns affected by the removal of the line to a route further west. Subsidies were important in holding or gaining power and had an effect in the shaping social relations between groups in the region.

The transport revolution was caused by technological changes, economic, political and cultural realities, but all these causes had important influences upon the social relations of the region. The social relations (or complex of various roles people maintained in the economic structure) were affected by the transport revolution in four important respects. First, subsidies had important influences on the nature of the political and economic roles exercised between the various groups who lived in the region. Second, the political and economic considerations of transport because they affected social relations (or the nature

Map 11

Place here map of rail routes, new and old.

Source: Val Lyons ANU, from SA Railway reports 1950-79.
Plate 20

photo of camel train

2 A camel train loaded with sleepers for construction of the Transcontinental Railway, South Australia, 1914

The modern, diesel 'Ghan shown during a stop at Marree, northern South Australia. Alongside the train, which runs on 3 ft 6 in. gauge line, is the new standard gauge (4 ft 8 in) line completed last year from Port Augusta as far as Marree.

Photo: Commonwealth Railways

Plate 21

Plate 22

photos of diesel freight

Four WAGR diesel-electric locomotives hauling 80 wagons of iron ore


Plate 23

photo of diesel passenger service

A Budd Diesel-hydraulic Rail Car. These cars are used mainly for short distance travel on the Trans-Australian Railway.

of the economic roles people performed in the economic structure). Third, the social relations were affected by the political changes which occurred in the mid-1960s. Fourth, the social effects of the transport revolutions influenced different groups in different ways.

5.2. The transport revolution: 1950 to 1979

In 1950 the camel was gradually being superseded by steam powered freight and passenger trains, the private automobile and heavy haulage vehicles. Although the rail transport system had been a function of the development of the colonial state, the federation of the various colonial states in 1901 was dependent more on intercolonial trade than on developments within the colonies themselves. By 1911 the federal government had taken over the rail systems from Port Augusta to Alice Springs, and later built the rail linkage from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie.

5.2.1. The extension of the line from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs

Construction of the first railway line in the region (Port Augusta to Oodnadatta and Alice Springs) began as early as 1874 and the line was opened for traffic in August 1929. The rail link from Port Augusta to Alice Springs was used more during the Second World War than at any other time. The Commonwealth Railways Annual Report 1948-49, reflects the massive increase in both the number of passengers and volume of freight.

The development of rail transport was determined almost

entirely by the future perceived needs of primary industry. It was no accident, therefore, that rail linkages extended into commercially marginal lands to bring primary produce from the Eyre Peninsula and the Flinders Ranges quickly and cheaply to either Port Augusta or Adelaide. Railway expansion had long been a feature of the state’s development. In the north, however, the rail system was not fully developed till the 1930s, when the line extended from Port Augusta through Oodnadatta to Alice Springs. There were two railway owners, the Commonwealth and the South Australian governments. As will become evident, problems associated with transport was an important issue for remote graziers. Transport was always part of the political rhetoric, particularly at election time. Despite the exceptional rises in freight loads from 1950-60 the railway administration was highly conscious of the threat it faced from road transport. Preferential treatment for rail was always provided for in the state and federal legislation. The threat from road transport was, nevertheless, real and it began to materialise by 1955 when roadworks improved access to remote areas north of Woomera and into the Flinders Ranges. Trucks replaced camels in areas east and west of the Port Augusta-Alice Springs railway line. The next most important transformation came when steam trains were replaced by diesels in both freight and passenger vehicles.

The impact of motor transport is evident in the increase of motor vehicles using South Australian roads between 1950 and 1956. The number of motor cars rose from 97,501 to 159,821 while commercial vehicles rose from 45,960 to 66,152. At the same time revenue from motor registrations rose from £1.2 million in 1950 to £3.5 million. In one sense competition from road transport was partly responsible for the technological change which came to the rail services of the north. In part also, the action of the Commonwealth Railway in minimising travel and freight costs was the most important reason for the change from steam to diesel in the 1950s.

Residents of such places as Marree, Oodnadatta, Quorn and Port Augusta recall that during the war most railway staff were employed in the troop mass feeding programs at the railway stations. Following the war a drastic downturn in traffic

2. P.A. Richmond, ‘Roads and Road Transport In South Australia’, Ibid., pp.251-260.
continued until 1949, when cattle and sheep movements boosted railway freight business. Because rail transport was heavily subsidised it took on a greater importance than it might otherwise have done. The route partly determined both the land use and the lands the pastoralists chose to lease. In turn, pastoral dominance ensured that subsidisation of the line continued, and that there was no change to the route. Rural groups pressured both state and federal governments to maintain transport subsidies. As a result the Playford and Menzies governments brought to the region their own peculiar pro-pastoral influences on the transport revolution. Similarly, the Dunstan government ensured that mining and Aboriginal interests were brought into the debate on future rail routes.

5.3. Politics and transportation

The politics of transportation involved two major questions, first, the way the railways contributed to the politics of the transport revolution; second, the manner in which political forces in the region contributed to the change in social relations from 1950-79.

The Commonwealth Railway (later became, Australia National Railway) had historically operated as a political pressure group on behalf of its own interest. Rail transport dominated the social circumstances of residents of the region. The Railway did this by the promotion of cheap transport for pastoral products to gain access to markets in Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne, and the European. In addition, the growing urban industrial workforce of Whyalla, Leigh Creek and Port Augusta required cheap passenger services made possible through improvements in modern rail technology. In this task the Railway was helped by both the Playford and the Menzies government's interest in the British weapons program at Woomera and Maralinga. These activities fostered better roads and a general increase in the pastoralists' standard of living. In turn, Playford's greater emphasis on rural industrial development undermined his own political support in the region. Similarly, Menzies had an interest in the region.

Plate 24

photo of Dunstan and Whitlam

Plate 25

Don Dunstan speaking at factory gate meeting, Port Augusta workshops.

Don Dunstan and Railways Commission Mr K.A. Smith at Commissioner’s Residence, Port Augusta.

and Ibid., November 11, 1971, p.21.
which grew during the 1950s.

5.3.1. Playford and Menzies

Playford was the leader of a political party made up of rural graziers and small land owning producers such as orchardists and market gardeners. He relied on the political support of the rural sector to hold power. He also used the decentralisation of industries to rural areas like Leigh Creek and Whyalla to maintain his urban support. That is, Playford represented not just his own Liberal Country League but all of South Australia. The offer of subsidies was a concrete way of demonstrating Liberal conservative government support for pastoralists which was combined with land leasing arrangements.

Roadworks and their improvement also played an important part in bringing both economic, cultural and social benefits to pastoralists. Menzies was able to display rhetorical support for the region during his election visit of the 1949 federal election campaign. Concrete support from Menzies came in the form of new roads for the region by way of the British weapons project. Improved communications such as telephones for local landowners adjacent to the British weapons testing site. While some pastoralists were inconvenienced by the testing project none was forced to vacate the prohibited area.

4. Press Cutting in the Harrie E. Green Collection, entitled *Aborigines Have A Flair For Films*, in the same collection in *Australian Institute of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander Studies* (AIATSIS), Series No., Ms 2121.
Both Playford and Menzies combined their state and federal powers to support the pastoralists. At the same time, however, keeping the roads graded helped the British testing surveillance teams to keep abreast of the movements of Aboriginal groups well into the 1960s. In addition, changes to the Aborigines protection legislation by Playford helped to provide training of Aborigines as pastoral labour. Also, Menzies provided unemployment benefits which acted to move Aborigines onto fringe-camps near such places as Marree and Oodnadatta. Despite the rhetorical and concrete support to pastoralists Playford’s development policies helped undermine the support he received from the local pastoralists. The weakening of relations between local pastoralists and the Playford government was accompanied by the strengthening of the mining industry in the region. Although both political parties were chasing the mining interests’ political support it was mining which, indirectly, helped the state Labor Party to gain government in 1965.

5.3.2. The relocation of the railway line

Playford’s and Menzies’ use of the railway upheld the local pastoral hegemony, either directly or indirectly. In South Australia the usefulness of the political support manifested itself in relation to access to markets for local pastoral products, heavy haulage vehicles and subsidies to local industrial centres (in this case providing coal to Port Augusta power station from the Leigh Creek coal fields and electricity for Whyalla and Adelaide). The original route through Quorn, Marree and Oodnadatta, to Alice Springs, was located along that route not only in order to facilitate the building and

maintenance of the transcontinental telegraph line and the camel transport routes but also because of the available artesian water supplies for steam powered railway engines. The reasons for shifting the line from the old route via Oodnadatta to a new route via Tarcoola to Alice Springs were threefold. First, was the geographic consideration (such as being located away from the inland lake systems of Lakes Eyre, Frome and Torrens. Second, was the changing political relations (that is a shift in the economic and political relationships in the region and the balance of power in South Australia) between 1950-65. Finally, a consideration of the political interplay during the period 1965-79 in which the pastoralists had to share the economic and political dominance they once held with two other groups. The two groups were the mining (that is mining project Managers and 1 industrialists in Adelaide) and Aborigines' interests.

5.3.3. The politics of 'standardisation'

The social relations of the transport revolution were affected in two ways by the politics of 'standardisation'. First there were political effects and second economic effects.

The political effects involved the national interest in terms of defence. Next came the impact of the population growth in such places as Leigh Creek, Port Augusta and Whyalla, each requiring fast passenger transport to Adelaide. Finally, 'standardisation' was part of Commonwealth Railway's goal between the mid-1940s to the late-1950s, as their own and government inquiries indicated.

The economic effect of 'standardisation' meant a new broader

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2. Lord Kitchener, on visit to Australia, 1911, in Harding, op.cit., p.62. See also, Harding, op.cit., p.64. See, Connell and Irving, op.cit., in particular, pp.296-298. See also, Crocker, op.cit., pp.41-59.
gauge on the north-south line from Port Augusta to Alice Springs. Most reports, however, favoured relocating the line to the west of the Flinders Ranges. This route, the reports claimed, would provide freight and passenger services to Leigh Creek and Coober Pedy. Finally, hundreds of railway employees would benefit from the new line, the upgraded diesel services, and their long term employment.

5.3.4. The SA-ALP and the railway

Did the pressure for standardisation come from the Commonwealth or the South Australian governments, during the period from 1965-79? It appears that federal-state rivalries brought about the diversity of railway gauges and that the commonwealth government in this period did nothing to undermine the independent rail transport aspirations of the various states. One event which clarifies the question of whether state and federal governments were working in opposition or unison was Dunstan’s action to resolve, with both the Whitlam and Fraser governments, the problem of gauge breaks.

In Opposition, as early as 1963, E.G. Whitlam was devising a national transport policy. Whitlam was saying then, that the Commonwealth could regulate State rail rates...It ha[d] promised to grant assistance for standardisation between....Broken Hill and Port Pirie.


Alternatively, in the late-1950s, South Australia had already benefited directly from lower freight charges at the expense of the Australian taxpayers. In addition, the Playford government in the early 1960s was aware of the advantages to trade contributed by the railway. Notwithstanding the trade considerations, South Australia was last to make the national standardisation connections. Most of the standardising linkages in other states had already been connected by 1950, except for the linkages from Port Augusta to the east. There were, however, a number of inquiries conducted by the federal and state governments between 1950 and the early 1970s. Their reports highlighted both the deficiencies of maintaining narrow gauge rail systems and the economic benefits of having a standard rail system that linked Brisbane and Perth. When the state Labor Party came to power in 1965 they wished to reform the remaining linkages but lacked the financial capacity. In 1972 the circumstances changed.

5.3.5. Dunstan/Whitlam

When the Whitlam Labor government came to power in November 1972 it wished ‘...to break down economic and social barriers between States....’ Railway development was part of the strategy:

The proposed standard gauge line and [Whitlam’s] objective of taking over the State rail system reinforced one another. If both plans came to fruition Crystal Brook or Port Pirie would be the cross roads of Australia with the standard gauge line, all under one management....

Whitlam’s leadership shifted the emphasis of earlier debate because, irrespective of competing plans, the Commonwealth thought ‘...the best possible railway should be built regardless of costs....’

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4. Ibid., p.22.
The Dunstan state government took advantage of Whitlam's generosity. Dunstan's direct involvement in the change from state to federal ownership of the state rail was clear. Less clear is Dunstan's choice of building the north-south rail link between Port Augusta and its prospective route via Tarcoola, Coober Pedy, Mintabie and Indulkana. Playford had favoured the route through the Flinders Ranges or immediately west of the ranges. Dunstan looked to populations further west, wooing support from the opal mining and northern reserve communities. In addition, Dunstan focused upon the need to include the railway workers in any future decision concerning the likely route.

The agreement between the state and federal governments over railway development provided for the construction of a standard gauge line from Tarcoola to Alice Springs. The cost of the new link in 1974 was $145 million dollars and would take five years to construct. The line between Tarcoola and Alice Springs was completed in 1980 and the old route line between Marree and Alice Springs was abandoned, an event which affected people of the region deeply.

5.4. The social effect

The social effects of the transport revolution were, first, that the railway moulded people's culture as well as the perception they had of themselves, and second, the railway system determined social relations.

The railway towns attracted different groups. First there were the Aborigines. After the mid-1950s, due to large Aboriginal population increases and the amount of time pastoralists spent catering for dependents of pastoral workers, families were forbidden to make camps on the properties where they worked. In turn, this meant that the fringe-camp became a permanent feature of railway towns from Port Augusta to the Northern Territory border. South Australian lessees were not forced, as they were in the Northern Territory, to accommodate their Aboriginal labour and their families on the properties. According to Henry Cox, a white pastoral and windmill hand, pastoralists discouraged the stock workers from taking their families to the properties where they worked. As a result some families were forced to make camp.

1 H. Cox, in 'Briscoe Tapes', loc. cit., ff.
on land where they were not required to pay rent. Other stock workers kept small shacks within the town boundaries but located them far enough from the town to be free of town police or railway employees. In other words social relations were determined both by the seasonal nature of the pastoral industry and the habitat of the isolated railway towns.

Then there were various non-Aboriginal groups. Marree and Oodnadatta had grown as camel depots and then as service centres for the railway and the pastoral industry. When the rail system superseded the camel transport many Afghans were made redundant while others were absorbed into the railway system in one way or another. As these people, along with white pastoralists, service personnel and Aboriginal people moved into these towns, they formed definite patterns of living. The various groups, as mentioned in the previous chapter, gravitated to specific areas of the town. The whites occupied the important areas on the main street while the Afghans clustered away from the whites and Aborigines of mixed-descent. Aborigines of full-descent were located either by force and later, by custom, about a mile from the main town itself. The period from 1950-79 was an important period because of changes in the pastoral industry and to rail technology together with the relocation of the line. These events influenced the residents of these towns in many ways, and although the transport system was dominant the region’s main forms of production, pastoralism and mining, remained.

The pastoral industry consequently influenced the ideology both of people of full-descent in fringe camps and those people of mixed descent living in the town. This was due mainly to the seasonal nature of the pastoral industry, which caused people to spend long periods on pastoral properties and some time in towns.

Furthermore, the social effects also included people’s

2. Ibid., pp.2072-2073.
3. Ibid., pp.2073-2074.
memories of the way technology and the economy impacted on them either as residents in the towns or as workers in the transport industries.

One resident of Marree who rode on the last train from Marree to Copley recalled '...living...in Copley with [her] brothers....They took me up a couple a days [beforehand and] I went from Linda siding....' She felt it was important to travel on the last Ghan. She said that, she '...should go up and say fare-well....' In Marree '...the Afghan and white families had a big turn-out - or a big celebration - .....' They killed bullocks and sheep '...for a week long Bar-B-Q, [a real] big feed-up for a week [and]....they brought all the Aboriginal people in, the white people did, bring 'em all in, help yourself, you know....'

The special last train went nine miles to the north of Marree and Miriam Dadleh remembered that '...[she] felt sad....' She had travelled up and down from Marree, Oodnadatta to Alice Springs on the old steam train. The closure made her '...feel sad to think the old camel strings used to run up and down....' Then came the '...motor car, big truck transport ... came in [the] poor camels went loose...then the steam train came in the motor cars came in the diesels [came] in taking all the low jobs from the Afghans....'

Miriam, like many other people of the region, had moved, back and forth between Port Augusta and Marree, but

in 1976 the last steam train, the last Ghan [went] in 1976 ... when the railway closed I left in 1979 to live in Port Augusta. I felt real sad about leaving old memories behind I came down here...my son was working on the railway and my daughter was living in Gawler.

Following her children in their southward migration Miriam moved permanently to Port Augusta. Another Aboriginal woman married to a white railway worker had a completely different view of the end of the steam trains. Because, as she said,

2. Ibid., ff.
3. Ibid., ff.
[my husband]...accepted it.... He used to say it was a 'God-send'....I'll tell you the difference is the washing. When his clothes came home after they changed to diesel they were clean. Before that when they were on the coal train and coal in the engine they used to come home dirty...[It was pleasing to me] when the steam trains went....There was nothing romantic...[for me and my husband] it was a job...

[and] he really did it well.

Not everyone, however, shared the Davies' view of the end of the steam era. Modernisation of the railway from steam to diesel also meant a change of gauge, due to the haulage capacity of the diesels.

Two trade unions, the Australian Workers Union and Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, operated in the region. The current office holders were born in the region. One of these was Ian Williams who saw the struggle over '...parity claims with other states...' in 1979. This conflict forced a strike which persisted for three weeks. The strike was not a victory for the rail men but what emerged from the strike could be considered a victory because, '...enginemen in this region were paid on a fortnightly basis....' If a strike lasted over a period of time, '...even eight hours, or whatever, and [the men] were not given any more employment in that fortnight...', the striking railmen would be guaranteed seventy

two hours wages.

The changes from steam to diesel affected Williams because he had to move from Tarcoola to Port Augusta. For example,

as a young person I lived at Tarcoola from the 1940s to the 1950s, for ten years. My father was employed as an engine driver... [in] the steam era. My Uncle, me Grandfather ...were also employed as engine drivers. My experience with steam, I remember the days when the trains used to come through Tarcoola they were serviced at Tarcoola by water and coal and the water was gained south of Tarcoola at

By the late-1950s technological changes had rendered steam obsolete. Except for the goods yards, and special line maintenance tasks, steam had been replaced by diesel, a factor which precipitated further changes.

During the 1950s Williams recalls leaving Tarcoola for Port Augusta, '...when dieselisation was introduced. People [from Cook and Rawlina]...who used to work on the western side...were transferred to Kalgoorlie....' Most of the others '...who lived at Tarcoola and those places [along the line] were transferred into Port Augusta....'

The dieselisation of freight and passenger services meant the redundancy of many workers on steam. When diesels were introduced along the northern and western routes from Port Augusta, '[the Commonwealth Railways] seen fit to try and only employ one person on the locomotive....' The enginemen took a '...strong stance. [The union] won that battle and there had to be two employed on the locomotive at that time....' Further structural changes saw rail labourers, their wives and families who lived in places such as Quorn, shifted to other rail depots or to Port Augusta. Most of this labour surplus took the form of gantry operators, porters at railway stations and signal staff. In any event, extensive social and economic dislocation resulting from these changes in technology were of importance to the trade unions in this transport industry.

The changes from steam to diesel changed some operations of railway labour. It also had an effect, however, on freight and passenger services. But its most marked effect was on the crews who worked the trains services. For example, Ian Williams recalls how the crews worked the services and the changes affecting his life as a railway employee when he '...came into the railway...in about 1964-65...dieselisation was in right through the system....' Williams sat for '...exams [to drive diesels and passed. He then]...worked trains through to Alice Springs on the narrow gauge line...[and then] to Marree ...[on the standard gauge]....'

Transhipment was a process which involved the transfer of a train from standard gauge to narrow gauge line. Ian Williams

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1. Ian Williams, Ibid., ff.
2. Ibid., ff.
3. Ibid., ff.
4. Ibid., ff.
described how the system ‘...[worked,] where a standard gauge line [went] alongside a narrow gauge line....’ Then those goods being transhipped were loaded ‘...by a gantry train which used to mobilise itself up and down the tracks....’ As the rail trucks were loaded the freight trains left for Marree from Port Augusta, and ‘...the standard gauge [trucks] used to travel on [the top of one freight carriage and into the] platform at Marree....’ The passengers were then transferred from one train to another ‘ which [had already been] marshalled on the other side of the line....’

Accommodation and wages for off-duty workers are described by Ian Williams as part of the changes he experienced such as, ‘...from [my] first involve[ment] in working [the] Alice Springs [line] we had...accommodation [problems]....’ Some of these problems were the ‘...square wooden break-vans with old...[wood] stove, ice-boxes not friges [,and] mattresses with [broken] springs....’ Improvements came over time because the unions ‘...fought for conditions and then gained better facilities, even to the extent that in the end we had air conditioning and...gas friges...at rest houses and in trains....’

Winning expenses for both the loss of social life and to compensate for inconveniences were important policies adopted by unions in their struggles against management, but so too were wages. ‘When we were employed on normal day-work there was a big change in resthouses....’ If the workers were retained away from home more than twelve hours, ‘...[they] had to be paid a certain amount of money over[-time] to try and speed the system up....’ Although the Railway was forced to accept the workers’ position, which was that ‘...social life was lost. Working on isolated areas of the line was always...a battle in...[most] areas....’ The rate at which workers were payed, therefore, was always an issue of disagreement between unions and management, for example, over nightshift penalties and long shift allowances, especially where enginemen and firemen were unable to agree with the Railway administrators.

1.Ian Williams, Ibid., ff.
2.Ibid., ff.
5.5. The importance of subsidies

As mentioned earlier, the term 'subsidy' refers to grants paid to the pastoral industry. It also refers to the reduction of costs of exports and goods for the producers (in this case beef, sheep, and grain) on the home market. The subsidies were also paid to the state government by the federal government:

...the Premier of South Australia (Mr Playford), [made an approach to]...the Commonwealth [for them] to pay seven-tenths of the cost of converting...[SA] 5ft 3in. and 3ft 6in. gauge to standard gauge....These were the most generous terms to be offered yet....

Freight subsidies were arranged in such a way that:

goods carried over longer distances paid proportionately less that goods carried over shorter distances. This was entirely irrational since some costs [were] fixed regardless of distance....The purpose was to benefit residents of areas remote from State capitals.

These and other subsidies came either in the form of grants to the state by the Commonwealth or arrangements by the state with the lease-holders to supplement costs of production and freight.

The subsidies paid to the state government during the two periods of the Dunstan government were meant as payment for the running costs of the railway in transporting sheep and cattle to both the Adelaide markets at Gepps Cross and to ports like Port Augusta and Port Adelaide for export to London. In addition, the purchase of the the South Australian Railway's rolling stock and all its assets by the Whitlam government was a direct subsidy to the South Australian government.

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The transport revolution pervaded the social life of the region. Playford, like Dunstan after him, was able to use the changes because transportation supplemented other changes. Both leaders wanted to consolidate their own political alliances and, through these, control of the region. Dunstan was also able to bring together changes in race relations with land reform. And, if the causes of the transport revolution were technological and political, the effects of which were social. The changes enabled desert people to shed traditions in order to make the social transition from desert to modern urban life. For the pastoralists the transportation revolution helped not only to bring pastoralists, miners and Aborigines closer but also to prolong the pastoralists' political and economic dominance over the region and gave both state and federal governments a more immediate presence in the region. In 1950 the usefulness of the railway, nevertheless, favoured the pastoralists, but by the end of the Dunstan reform era, the railway system had a wider appeal. These once antagonistic groups were, at least on the surface, forced to cooperate more closely. It is the emergence of the phenomenon of new social relationships based on power sharing, during the period from 1950 to 1979, which is the subject of chapter six.
Chapter 6

The emergence of Aboriginal political consciousness in the region of study: 1950 to 1979

6.1. Introduction

My argument in this chapter is that the causes underlying the raising of Aboriginal peoples' consciousness during the 1970s may be found in the dialectical processes of the 'race' policies of not only of the Playford and the Dunstan regimes but also ideas brought into the region from outside during the period 1950-79. The intention is to investigate the cause and effect of the rise of Aboriginal consciousness within the region of study. It is also intended to investigate the level at which changes were being motivated from within the Australian political economy. It will be important to know, therefore, from what source the Aboriginal social and political expression emanated, and how it changed, over the period 1950-79.

A further aim of the chapter is to establish the link between Playford's 'protectionist' and Dunstan's 'reformist' ideologies, which assisted in the emergence of Aboriginal consciousness. The Aborigines Protection Board policies, as applied under Playford from 1950-65, were influenced by the assimilationist and social welfare policies of the Menzies federal government during the period 1950 to the mid-1960s. As the Aboriginal population moved into the urban centres the pressure increased for 'race' policies to be modified. Dunstan's reform policies provided the opportunity for this to occur. But these policies were affected by influences from outside the region. For example, by the post-colonial humanism promoted by the United Nations during the period 1945-60.

The discussion focuses on the creation of new social 1 relationships which underpinned race policies. The development of new ways of living in and around reserves, pastoral properties and small towns, required the creation of new social relations. These in turn involved changes in the thinking of all concerned - in government, on missions and cattle properties, and in small and large mining and industrial towns, as reformist ideas impacted upon the region.

1. The term 'social relations' is used in the Marxian sense, see K.Marx, 'Preface To A Contribution To The Critique Of Political Economy', in Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Progress Press, Moscow, 6th Printing, 1982, pp.180-182.
In achieving these aims the focus will be on three crucial events. The establishment and maintenance of Yalata, together with the role of the Stuart case in Playford’s political collapse is first. The entry of state and federal bodies into the interpretation and implementation of ‘race policies’, with Ernabella as a case study, is second. Third is the rise to power of the South Australian Labor government. Labor introduced the reformist policies of the 1960s and 1970s, which in turn encouraged the emergence of the Pitjantjatjara Council as a modern social, political, economic and cultural entity.

6.2. The creation of Yalata Lutheran mission

The Aborigines Protection Board’s 1949 report indicated that it had ‘...a serious problem [with] the reserve at Ooldea....’ In particular, the population increase and the numbers of permanent residents were the real problem but, according to the report, ‘...the Board was [motivated]...to secure a pastoral holding...where the young men...[would] be instructed in pastoral work and sheep husbandry....’ Government impatience towards pastoral labour shortages meant that ‘...shearing, [would be the employment whereby Aborigines were] to] become useful members of the community....’

The closure of the United Aborigines Mission Ooldea children’s home and Adult Aboriginal ration depot, according to the missionaries, was caused by the lack of potable water. The Ooldea spring levels were unacceptably low and the numbers of people using the spring was high. The Board funded the project and the Mission employed two missionaries, Harrie and Marion Green. Harrie Green’s intention of closing the mission and depot had been conveyed to the Board as early as 1946.

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Green’s view was that ‘...the Lutherans had ...only come to round up the children and take them immediately to Koonibba Mission....’
By June 1950 the Board reported that it was inspecting a large pastoral property with a view to its purchase as '...a future home for Aborigines living at Ooldea....' The Board's 1951 annual report stated that a 1,500 square mile property had been purchased '...from the Yalata Pastoral Company at a cost of L68,000 pounds (or $136,000.00)....' By 1955, the circumstances were that the children were housed at the Lutheran Mission at Koonibba. 'The aborigines {sic} on [the Yalata] Reserve...[were] still living a nomadic life...a considerable distance from the Headquarters....' At the same time '...the Board...supplied a large timber-framed building to the...[Lutherans] at Yalata for use as a...dormitory [for the school children]....'

By Christmas of 1952, however, no mission had been established for the older men on their arrival at Colona station, and they were still living in the open. The Lutheran Pastor wrote to a friend, that he had '...[given his] first address in [the local Aboriginal] language on Christmas Eve....' The response from Aborigines, according to Pastor Eckerman, was good. Afterwards, Eckerman '...had occasion to tackle them...about the forcible initiation of two young men, Robert and Jack....' These men were forced to go through the first stage of the initiation. When Eckerman heard of the matter. '...[He] assembled the men, and told them that their hethen {sic} customs could not be continued if they wanted to follow Jesus....' Nobody spoke, but then '...one man spoke up, "we will follow Jesus"....' Despite Eckerman's actions ceremonial life was said to have been practised elsewhere, away from the gaze of the missionaries.

Meanwhile, Penhall, the Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board, was unable to keep the assurances he made

4.See copy of letter from Pastor C.V.Eckerman to H.E. Reichenbach of Glenlee Vic, dated 28/1/1953, p.2. (no page numbers are shown)
5.'H.E.Green Collection', op.cit., AIATSIS, Canberra, Series No., 15502.
6.Letter, Ekerman to Reichenbach op.cit. Although non-secret ceremonial life was practised at Yalata from that time onwards it was claimed by Dr Kingsley Palmer of AIATSIS that he observed ceremonial life in 1980 on lands north of the railwayline (or on
earlier to Harrie Green and was forced to make temporary arrangements for the children to be accommodated at Koonibba, a Lutheran Mission an hour and a half by motor vehicle south from Colona towards Ceduna. Even later, however, the Lutherans were given full responsibility for some of the children, the rest went to either Ummeewarra at Port Augusta or Gerrard reserve near Berri on the River Murray. In any event, by 1956 the Yalata Reserve was completely established as a legal entity, jointly operated by the Board and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia. The mission commenced even though the living and service area had not yet been completed. At the end of 1950 the Board relied upon the Lutheran missionaries to adopt greater responsibilities for daily life on and around the 1,700-square mile sheep property. For example, the children who had been returned to Yalata from the temporary accommodation at Koonibba, were being communally fed. The church was gradually clothing and feeding the whole community, the costs of which were completely covered by the Board.

Meanwhile, from 1961 to the end of Playford’s premiership in 1965, a mixture of ‘protection’ and ‘assimilation’ policies was practised and the latter was given legislative form in 1962. For example, in 1963 the Aborigines Protection Board reported that

The agreement which is for a period of 10 years, expires on 30th June, 1964, provides that the Church ... [would] supply the necessary staff to work Yalata Reserve as a pastoral undertaking to promote the welfare of Aborigines.

This was a subtle and contradictory interpretation and implementation of a policy, which could have been described as a policy of ‘private enterprise welfare’. The report goes on to account for the clothing, blankets, rations and supply of medicines and an area now called the Maralinga lands). But see Isabel White, ‘From Camp to village: some problems of adaptation’, in Aborigines and Change, (ed.) R.M. Berndt, AIAS Canberra, 1977, and See K. Palmer, ‘Grey Earth and Clean Sand’, unpublished Report, Flinders University, Adelaide, 1982.

3. Ibid., ff.
medical services to the Yalata residents, who totalled 350 in 1963.

The Protection Board was planning to open Yalata as a training centre for Aboriginal pastoral workers. On Yalata, as on all missions in South Australia, high levels of unemployment prevailed and the commonwealth social service payments were used to attract people away from the reserves. For example, the Board stated that, '...this [policy to attract people away by using Commonwealth Social Services], to some extent, will prevent the return to Reserve of Aborigines who are temporarily unemployed....' The Commonwealth began providing unemployment benefits to Aborigines wherever they lived, '...provided they [were] consistently employed away from reserves or missions....'

In parliament, by the early 1960s, other reforms were being planned. On the one hand, the federal authorities were being pressured to reform the Commonwealth Electoral Act concerning 'Aborigines Voting Rights'. On the other hand, the Playford government moved to change the Board from a 'protectionist' body to a Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Where was the motivation coming from for the reforms that were to be implemented from the early 1960s? As early as 1956 Don Dunstan was to take close political and interest in Aboriginal questions in order to mount an attack on the Playford both in and outside parliament. In 1958 Dunstan said,

I joined the Aborigines Advancement League in Adelaide... to work as a group on campaigns to end discriminatory legislation against Aborigines....

Together, getting reports from like bodies interstate, we evolved a general policy about Aborigines which we could pursue: the assimilation policy must be scrapped....

Dunstan the lawyer was confident therefore that a policy focusing on Aboriginal rights was the direction to take. This was a radically different approach to the idea of 'need', the basis upon which conservative policies were constructed. Dunstan's understanding appeared to see Aborigines (whether they were urban or rural) as a homogeneous group, but who were faced with different choices. The first small reform created by Dunstan was in 1958 when he facilitated the repeal of the '...consorting

1.Ibid., 'APB Report of 1962, p.5.
2.Dunstan, 'Felicia', op.cit., p.70.
provisions of the Police Offenses Act....’

By 1962 reform of federal legislation was sponsored by the South Australian Legislative Assembly and members of a House of Representatives committee travelled some 22,000 miles ‘...to obtain evidence about the provision of reform of the federal political franchise for Aborigines from 327 witnesses including welfare officers and others....’ Voting rights for Aborigines in South Australia had always been a feature of Aboriginal policy but not in the federal voting sphere. The Aborigines Protection Board legislation was replaced the same year by another of Playford’s subtle changes. The new arrangements involved ‘...a Bill...to repeal the Aborigines Act 1934-39 to promote the welfare and advancement of Aborigines and persons of Aboriginal blood....’

It was Dunstan, however, who was prompting Playford’s reform program by directing it away from protection and towards a new form of assimilation. Playford, like other members of the Adelaide establishment, thought that race relations had no more substance than any other deep seated community prejudices. The idea that race relations was an important issue involving people whose habitat was Yalata, Koonibba and Ceduna apparently never crossed Playford’s mind. Nor had Playford seen himself as being in any respect backward in his thinking about the role Aborigines might play in South Australia’s future. Increasingly, as Playford moved closer and closer to his demise, his belief that he was ‘helping them’ by focusing on ‘need’ rather than ‘right’ would begin to show up as an illusion.

6.3. The ‘Stuart case’ and its significance

In a sense, Playford’s downfall commenced on Saturday the 21 December 1958 when the headlines of the West Coast Sentinel reported that a ‘half-caste’ Aborigine had been charged and remanded for the rape and murder of a nine-year old girl, Mary


1.Ibid., ff.
3.Ibid., ff. See also Dunstan, ’loc.cit., p.71.
Hattam on the beach at Thevenard near Ceduna. The Aboriginal man from Central Australia, Rupert Max Stuart, was tried, found guilty and sentenced to death for the crime. The case involved charges of police brutality, an appeal to the Privy Council in England, a Royal Commission, a commuted sentence of death to one of life imprisonment and, finally, arguably, the political downfall of Playford government.

The case was moved from Ceduna to Adelaide. As one of the prosecutors later wrote,

Apart from the murderer himself, the group which participated in that midnight scene on Thevenard beach [when looking for the girl reported missing] were the first people to know about a crime of which the consequences were to be without parallel in Australian legal history.

The Prosecutor, Sir Roderic Chamberlain, might have added that

With the benefit of hindsight, it can be seen that the watershed of the Playford era was reached a few days before Christmas, 1958. The event which marked it was not itself connected with politics. It was the brutal rape and murder of [the] nine-year old girl. During the ensuing twelve months, this killing was...to provoke the most sensational developments in the State’s criminal and political history. The ‘Stuart Affair’ was one of the principal catalysts which precipitated these events.

Playford, the Liberal Country League and the Adelaide establishment were blind to the changing face of Australian and South Australian politics. The Stuart case caused the exposure of Playford’s authoritarian style. Two South Australian political analysts who observed Playford, indicated that:

2. K.S. Inglis, The Stuart Case, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1961, p.312, (see the comments made on Playford and others who felt a conspiracy had been waged by the press).
[his] writ ran...unchallenged through both the parliamentary party and...party organisation. Yet his dominance was now stultifying....His authoritarian style, his parochial complacency and his insensitivity to current public opinion were obvious in....the Stuart case.

Playford's ill-contrived strategy in handling complex legal questions in parliament further exposed his declining political skills.

Other reasons why the Stuart case contributed to Playford's downfall include these: the crime took place at Ceduna - the closest urban centre to the many Aborigines at Koonibba (60 kilometres away) - and Yalata (150 kilometres away). This accounts for the political significance of the Stuart case and the importance of Ceduna in the region. The rape and murder caused relationships between Aborigines and the white people of the region to deteriorate. In addition, '...like the Dreyfus affair in France..., [the Stuart case] focused the discontents against the...Playford regime, and shook it...as much as the Salisbury...affair...shook...Dunstan...twenty years later....' The increasingly unpopular premier relied more and more for advice on race relations from the Aborigines Protection Board, which was unclear of its own direction.

6.4. Playford's race policies 1950-65

In 1950 the Aboriginal population was increasing, and migrating to live in fringe camps near the towns of the region such as Ceduna, Port Augusta, Leigh Creek, Marree, Quorn, Oodnadatta, Coober Pedy, Ernabella, Ooldea, Koonibba, and Yalata. In addition, the state and federal Aboriginal policies in the 1950s were ambiguous in practice but contradictory in theory. The ambiguity emerged in the way that the two governments were helping to create fringe camps in and around these towns.

The Aborigines Protection Board policies were theoretically contradictory. The 1963 annual report of the new Aboriginal Affairs Department reflects this:

There are many Aborigines...living throughout a wide area of the State...from spear-carrying nomadic people living under tribal conditions to those occupying Trust homes in country towns...The stage of development has now been reached where

1. Blewett and Jaensch, op.cit., p.15.
2. Crocker, op.cit., p.90.
most of the Aborigines and part-Aborigines require guidance rather than protection....

There was confusion, also, about the application of policy which viewed all Aborigines as recipients of 'protection'. The reason for the confusion was that most Aboriginal people were able to comprehend neither the contradictory nature of protection policies nor their own identity as stipulated by the Board. The problem appears to have been one of people of Aboriginal descent being able to define exactly who could receive financial benefits from the Board and its agents, the regional welfare officers. The racial mixture of the people of Aboriginal descent was so complex that people eligible to claim benefits were sometimes unable to do so. From the service agents' point of view, the confusion arose because the 'race' question was becoming more a political rather than an administrative question. Added to the confusion was the fact that people of Aboriginal descent, in seeking a different life from the desert, missions, reserves and pastoral properties were migrating into fringe camps on the edges of the towns.

One example of this 'ambivalence of identity' was Mona Kennedy. Mona was born at Lilla Creek and she was the daughter of a white fettler. Mona's mother was an Aboriginal of mixed European and Aboriginal descent from Lilla Creek, a transit camp used by camel and donkey teamsters passing through from Oodnadatta to Darwin via Hermannsburg and Alice Springs. Lilla Creek was one day's journey by camel or donkey train from the Finke Telegraph Station.

Once the railway was built in the late 1920s Lilla Creek became a cattle station homestead. Most of the Aboriginal people who had congregated around the old depot migrated either south to places such as Oodnadatta, Marree and Port Augusta, or north to Hermannsburg and Alice Springs. Mona's family went to Oodnadatta when her father was posted to a fettler's camp and the family followed him south. Mona related her life as the daughter of a

3. Fay Gale, 'A Study of Assimilation', op.cit., Chap., 6, pp.199-234. For specific evidence see the following selected reports for the period 1954 to 1960, by the LRWE Native Patrol Officer, W.B. MacDougall, 'Maralinga Documents' loc.cit, located in AIATSIS, Canberra, Series No., G. 646.83, R1, Vols, 1-18.
fettler along the line north of Oodnadatta

In the 1930s everybody knows that it was wrong for Europeans and Aborigines to marry so my father had a lot of trouble with the police and with the authorities when my mother was given to him as his wife in the Antigarintja tribe. And my father came from overseas and he was trying to get a job... [and] someone said to him...there is a railway line being built from Marree to Alice Springs, would you like to come across Jack...[Mona's Father] see if you can get a job. So my father got the job as a ganger...he was stationed at Pedirka [north of Oodnadatta]... where he met my mother....

Dad usually worked on the railways, like during the week he would live in the railway housing, but at weekends he would come and live in...our [or Ngura in Antigarintja] home in the creek.

As Mona recalled that as she grew

My family group, the Antigarintja, ... moved from Alberga, Mt Sarah, Dalhousie,... our people were very self sufficient people they worked at Hamilton station. What I saw ... at Hamilton station [was] on camels and what we saw [was] that our people...[lived] on the sandhills near the station....

We had seven or eight dogs...many Nguras [or our people] and about...fifty people. Maybe a hundred, because we also met with the Southern Aranda people,...from Macumba way. We saw the station house...a?tin roof with one big room which was a kitchen stove. Anagnu [or Aboriginal] women worked in the kitchen for Mr. Jack Reid...and he married... one of our family...I regarded him as a relative.

Mona then described her camp life on weekends, at Hamilton Downs, a cattle station near the northern South Australian border:

When we came into the camp...my father would hobble the camels...take the saddle off...take all our food... down and we made our ngura. In good weather we would make a shelter. I would go and get wood and my mother would make

2.Ibid., ff.
a fire...put our swag down...and then we start cooking our food ....My mother would make damper out of flour, then we had tin meat or beef from the station...all the time.

Later, Mona moved to Alberga and then to Oodnadatta when she was nine years old. She claims that her father moved to Alice Springs because he wanted her to go to school. Mona and her mother, however, moved to Oodnadatta, where they lived in the fringe camp, which she found very strange. Mona claimed that the camp dwellers were still carrying out traditional practices. This claim, however, is not supported by other source material such as the Berndts’ or the United Aborigines Mission workers who lived at Oodnadatta in the period between the 1930s and 1950s. Mona then migrated to Adelaide where she married a white man and settled permanently. Mona now teaches on a part-time basis while, at the same time, she carries out part-time tertiary studies.

At the time of interview, Mona lived in Adelaide but she identified with the Oodnadatta community which, since the rail link was abandoned in the late 1970s, survives on the passing tourist trade and by providing labour, mail and store services to surrounding sheep and cattle properties. To the Oodnadatta community she appears as a symbol of a high culture which the other people of Oodnadatta have lost. She speaks Antigarintja, a language not widely spoken but related to Pitjantjatjara.

Mona’s recollections of fringe-camp life suggests two anomalies. First, her claim about having been initiated at Oodnadatta when she was nine is not borne out by ethnographic sources on Oodnadatta. The Berndts, both of whom were working at Oodnadatta in 1950-51, were quite clear about the composition and nature of Oodnadatta community:

In and about the town of Oodnadatta, people of aboriginal stock may be divided into three...groups....Groups I, [A]borigines living near the town....within one mile [1.5 km]...Group II [A]borigines and part-[A]borigines have their homes in the town...speak English, but...use their own dialects...although [they feel]...they are superior to...Group I....And they praised for not attending camp ceremonies....In the third and smallest group....[they] are reluctantly accepted by the white townspeople. People of

1.Ngitjingitji, Ibid., ff.
2.Ronald and Catherine Berndt, From Black To White In South Australia, Chesire, Melbourne, 1951, pp.143-147.
this third group speak almost exclusively English, with hardly a trace of [A]boriginal intonation.

The Berndts add that no initiation ceremonies were ever held in Oodnadatta and that any Aboriginal, or part-Aboriginal, married to white men were not part of the traditional groups who camped a mile away from the town.

The United Aborigines Mission workers, such as Anne Lock and Violet Turner both of whom described the circumstances of people at Oodnadatta in the 1930s, made no mention of ceremonial life being practised in fringe camps. It is possible, however, that the missionaries were unaware of the continuation of customary rituals. Many of the Aboriginal fringe camp dwellers they knew during the 1930s and 1940s at Oodnadatta, may have been too sick to participate in ceremonial life. Even so, one of the features of fringe camp life was the absence of traditions on the one hand, as well as the absence of law and order on the other. Traditional life possessed forms of authority from which many of the fringe camp dwellers had earlier escaped. Further, fringe-camp life at Oodnadatta relied on the Oodnadatta police to keep order, because of the lack of organisation by fringe-camp dwellers themselves and the total absence of order among them. Males tended to drink heavily, and the camp women had only one recourse to law and order - the police in Oodnadatta.

Another anomaly of the transition from traditional life to fringe-camp life was the continuity of traditional languages, and the past being used in a teleological way. For example, Mona learnt to speak Antigarintja in its classical form as an adult in Adelaide and returned to Oodnadatta on occasions to a people who had lost the capacity to speak the language as she was able to do. Although Antigarintja is part of a distinct culture it is not practised by many people, even in 1950 when the Berndts carried out their study. In other words, in the late 1970s the references to traditional life at Oodnadatta was an escape by Mona, and by the fringe-camp dwellers, to a 'golden' past. The fringe-camp groups were idealising a culture which did not exist in any real form. It appeared from what Mona was talking about that the fringe-camp dwellers were too caught up in coping with change to evaluate the distinction between their own lifestyle.

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1. R.M & C Berndt, Ibid., pp.147-149. See also, Violet E. Turner, Lazarus At The Gate, UAM, Melbourne, (1932), pp.7-52.
2. Ibid., p.50.
and the classic cultural forms which had disappeared. In addition, it seemed that, the fringe-camp groups at Oodnadatta were cherishing illusions of a lost past which they mentally reconstructed then attempted to act out the reconstruction as real life.

The breakdown of the Antigarintja, Dieri and Yankuntjatjara cultures had been a continuing process from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An evaluation of Mona’s recollections reveal an attempt by her to reconstruct an identity within the cultures which existed in an ideological sense only, rather than in fact. She, and the fring-camp people, used the idea of a lost classical culture but were unable - or found it impossible - to practise it because their circumstances had been drastically transformed, even between the period 1950 to the 1970s.

These fringe-dwellers at Marree, Oodnadatta and Ceduna were confronted by both the impossibility of practising a ‘lost culture’ and the pressures from the dominant wider Australian society. Many Oodnadatta people exemplify the fear fringe-dwellers held for certain ‘welfare’ incentives (such as jobs and houses) offered to residents to leave the fringe-camp habitat and move to industrial centres such as Leigh Creek and Port Augusta. The types of people who remained were mostly white people or Aboriginal groups who had a material stake in the region.

In addition, there were white people who owned businesses, for example, the hotel-motel, the general store, and the government agents who operated the postal and transport services, and those in government positions the school teachers, police

1.M.Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, Tavistock Pub., London, 1972, p.14. In a discussion of ‘subjectivity’ Foucault say: ‘...what is being bewailed, is that ideological use of history by which one tries to restore to...[people] everything that has unceasingly eluded...[them] for over a hundred years. All the treasure of bygone days was crammed into the old citadel of this history....’ This same concept is used by James Clifford in an article ‘Identity in Mashpee’ in J.Clifford, The Predicament of Culture, Harvard Uni., Press, UK., pp.277-346.
2.J.Gibson, Molly Lennon’s Story ‘That’s how it was’, Aboriginal Heritage Branch Pub, Adelaide, 1989. See chapter 9 on ‘Working Life, Marriage and Family’, pp.45-55. Molly Lennon was typical of many children from the fringe communities taken to live in the children’s home at Oodnadatta. Molly tells of a life completely cut off from traditional life yet she reconstructs a past similar to Mona’s which idealises a traditional past she never knew.
and road maintenance workers. The rest were itinerant and casual stock workers on the surrounding stations. The casual labourers, like the Kennedy family, were caught up in change, and would work for local pastoralists for a living and then return to the small towns. The towns affected Aboriginal and other families in ways described previously by Kasper Scheppers, the Community welfare worker, and his wife, Anne, a school teacher at Marree.

At the same time, the Aborigines Protection Board offered certain incentives to attract people to the urban area, such as schools for the children, jobs for the adults, entertainment and 1 housing. Ultimately, however, Playford's policies relied too heavily on the Board's narrow ideological view which had been formulated in the late-1930s. That view was fostered by such people as Professor Cleland and his predecessor A.A. Abbie.

As Fay Gale indicated in her Study of Assimilation, that it is extremely difficult to define government policy towards Aborigines and Part-Aborigines in South Australia From...[a general statement made by the APB in 1957 Gale concluded,] that assimilation, protection and absorption, all three...[were, at the same time,] aims of the Aborigines Protection Board.

The confusion was not solely bureaucratic, because Aborigines who lived in Ceduna in the 1950s were equally undecided about what was happening in their own lives.

One such person was Maurice Edwyn Miller. Maurice was born at Koonibba, the son of an Aborigine who had migrated to the region and married an Aboriginal woman from Koonibba. Maurice’s parents moved away from Koonibba under wartime labour conditions. In the 1950s Maurice’s father, Bob Miller, was the ‘nightsoil’ contractor around Ceduna before becoming an itinerant farm worker. In the 1950s he attended school in Ceduna. Recalling the prejudices of the 1950s he said,

my lunch was taken, the bell rang and we normally had to go to lunch. [I went to get my lunch from my] school-bag and I saw my younger brother crying and I asked him what was the matter. He said somebody ate all our lunch....I better report this to the teacher,...Mrs Brooks. [Mrs Brooks] made it her business to find out who took my lunch.

When Maurice recounted the story to his mother she was pleased to know that the white children had eaten her sandwiches because, as Maurice indicated, this proved that her cooking was good. This, like the recollection of his early working life, was indecisive because Maurice was unable to distinguish between his own family’s material circumstances and those of the rest of the white people who lived in Ceduna. The white population of Ceduna lived in private or rented houses in the town, but the Miller and other Aboriginal families lived in humpies in the scrub on the northern side of the town.

The significance of Maurice’s uncertainty is that it reflected the idea that the church at Koonibba, and the townsfolk of Ceduna, vigorously opposed the idea of ‘difference’. This emerges when, talking about his mother, Millar says

[that] because I was proud of the fact that what my Mum and what my Dad have spoken to me about...that I’m no different than anyone else, and that really stuck into my memory ...I feel now that I’m no different to anyone else.

This ambivalence had its roots in the ‘work ethic’ propagated by the Lutheran Church at Koonibba, and reinforced by the behaviour of

3. Ibid., ff.
4. Ibid., ff.
5. Ibid., ff.
6. Ibid., ff.
of Maurice’s parents. At the same time, the promotion of a ‘work ethic’ was about to be employed as a workable strategy by the Lutherans who were, by the early 1950s, in full control of the residents at the Yalata mission.

It was perhaps this dedication to the denial of difference, and the Lutheran community’s steadfast acquiescence to the ‘work ethic’, which persuaded the Aborigines Protection Board to choose the Lutherans to manage Yalata in 1952. The alternative policy practised by the Ooldea mission concentrated the missionary efforts on the children. The Aborigines Protection Board had been mostly concerned about taking the children from Ooldea which, according to Harrie Green, was the motive behind removing them to Koonibba. Moreover, the adults were seen by two government bodies as a threat to their operations. The first to show any irritation about the migratory patterns away from Yalata was the Commonwealth Railway, which saw adult Aborigines as a threat to their tourist trade along the east-west railway line. The other body was the Weapons Research Establishment Range at Woomera who were concerned that Aborigines would travel across the rocket trajectory line. Some attempt had to be made to remove those Aborigines who had camped at the sidings along the railway line. Late in 1953 they were removed and Menzies requested cooperation from Playford to pass appropriate legislation to revoke the Ooldea reserve.

6.5. Mission development, missionaries and race relations policies: 1950s to the 1970s

Briefly, Ernabella began operations in the early 1930s when Dr Charles Duguid, an Adelaide medical practitioner and Presbyterian, was looking to create a mission in the region. Reverend R.R. Love was the first superintendent. One interpretation of its early role was

2. For three perspectives on the ‘Closure of Ooldea’ see: (1) Justice McClelland, Royal Commission Into British Testing into Nuclear Testing In Australia, AGPS, Canberra, 1985, pp.164-168; (2) the other source is an attempt to focus on an Aboriginal viewpoint through the uses of the Royal Commission’s transcripts collected, by Christobel Mattingley and K. Hampton (eds), Survival In Our Own Land, SA Jubilee Pub., Adelaide, 1988, Chap., 11, pp.89-96; finally, (3) see, J. Eames and A. Collett, entitled The Final Submission, AGPS, 1985. See also ‘Maralinga Documents’, loc.cit., Vol., 3, pp.412-422.
as a buffer between the Aborigines and the whites, the location...was carefully chosen. The mission land was close to the eastern border of the North West Reserve. In 1939, the leases...adjoining the eastern boundary of the reserve were cancelled thus the mission location was...next to the reserve.... [T]he Aborigines did not have to trespass on private property...to reach the mission...for medical treatment or dingo scalp trading.

The same writer pointed out that, although progressive, the guiding philosophy was protectionist. By 1950, however, a new policy was forced on the mission from outside, despite resistance from Duguid, Love and R.M.Trudinger [the latter being a superintendent in the late-1940s]. The Aborigines Protection Board reported in 1950 that,

while the older people will still maintain themselves by hunting, the younger people are wanting to take up work which is both useful and remunerative. Wells have been sunk...troughs, stockyards...spinning and weaving for women and girls...[have] been established....The older men are employed as shepherds, shearers, well sinkers...and there is an air of prosperity reflected in the increased activities in the trading store. The pastoral work at Ernabella is developing...over a wider area of country and plant...[has been] acquired for baling the wool for market .... [E]ducational work has been maintained...and two native girls ...are now assistant teachers.

These are clearly assimilationist objectives and the mission’s own newsletter advertised that approach. But it also promoted the rhetoric that no change had been effected between 1946 when Duguid delivered his broadcast address and the advent of Trudinger’s idea of 1950, which was to leave the Natives’ tribal and nomad way of life alone as much as possible. This retarding of the process of civilisation has been a most important factor in the maintenance of both the health and happiness of our Pitjantjatjara people.

4.Trudinger, Ibid., ff.
Plate 26

photographs of Ernabella

Shearing Time at Ernabella.

Father and Son. Boy brought from bush for treatment.

Gilpin—Half-caste Assistant.

The House Girls.

6.5.1. Ernabella: religious, social and economic ideology

This policy guided the Presbyterian mission practice from 1937 to 1950 '...to bring about a more settled and civilised way of life here. I mention this changed outlook because it is second only to the prime purpose of evangelisation....' If this was the driving force behind Presbyterian ideology, they were also conforming to the Protection Board's paradoxical ideas of assimilation. This meant that as many people as possible were supposed to have remained unaffected by the wider influences of Australian society.

For those Aborigines camping on the mission a number of strategies were adopted to quicken their exposure to the surrounding cattle properties, to the nearby towns and to the wider world. Firstly, as indicated above, males were trained as surplus pastoral labour. The new social service arrangements introduced by the Commonwealth in the late-1940s, encouraged many people unwittingly to become fringe-dwellers on pastoral stations and in Marree, Oodnadatta, Finke, Leigh Creek and Quorn. This was a strategy for socialisation which, as mentioned above, had more economic benefits for the mission than for Aboriginal inmates.

Secondly, a strategy to further expose mission-dwelling Aborigines to the outside world was the creation of a choir which travelled to the Australian urban centres and overseas. Moreover, visits to Adelaide on holidays and enrolment of Aboriginal children of mixed and full-descent in schools in Adelaide was part of the strategy. On the mission itself, the socialisation processes during 1950-57, were made more complex by

1. APB, 'Annual Report 1949', op.cit., p.2. But, see also, APB, 'Annual Report 1960', op.cit., p.5, where the APB were still complaining that the Commonwealth excluded some Aborigines from receiving social service benefits enjoyed by other taxpayers.  
the idea that Ernabella was, more than a mission, an economic service centre, a township and a Christian community.

Thirdly, the economic base in 1950-57 shifted from joint funding by the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions and the Protection Board, to greater funding of projects by the Protection Board itself. The latter provided funds for welfare rations and buildings. Employment was found locally for men trained in pastoral work, and work was created for people at Ernabella in support of training projects. In addition, women were employed in the same period by working on wool products made at Ernabella, and it was this project which enabled the mission to survive as an institution of religion and training.

The Protection Board's policy of 'assimilation' and the Presbyterian's policy of 'controlled contact', at Ernabella, were both underpinned by the Protestant work ethic. Instilling work ethic patterns upon former desert Aborigines was the real driving force behind the social change imposed upon mission inmates.

The Protestant work ethic has been defined as an attitude to work in which there is acceptance of a 'duty to work' or 'the calling'. This was the notion that it was man's duty to labour in the vineyard of the Lord. Religious purity was linked to work....Those with 'the calling' were identifiable by their economic success through hard work.

From 1950, it was possible to see how this work ethic was promoted among Ernabella Aborigines through mission theory and practice with encouragement from the state's Protection Board. It

3. Rev., V.W. Coombes, Ernabella And Fregon Outstation Central Australia, Australian Presbyterian Board Of Missions, Sydney, (In personal communication, Bill Edwards thought that the paper was prepared and finalised in 1961 and the paper has now been deposited in the AIATSIS, Canberra under the above title).
permeated the thinking of missionary managers at all the subsidised missions of the region - Yalata in the south, Nepabunna near Leigh Creek and, in particular, Ernabella in the far north.

6.5.2. Ernabella Mission: 1958 to the late-1970s

Bill Edwards arrived at Ernabella directly from Melbourne University in 1958. Prior to his arrival he had undertaken evangelical training and ordination as a Presbyterian Minister in 1957. Edwards' first letter to his father in 1958 related how he had travelled via Adelaide and Finke by train, and then by truck from Finke to Ernabella. Although guarded in what he talked about in his letters and on tape he accepted, or did not resist the idea that the '...two Ernabella boys...Alec and Gordon...[would] be going right through with me although unfortunately they are in a different carriage....' What he failed to make clear was that it was socially unacceptable for Aboriginal passengers to travel in the same carriages as white passengers. Equally, he failed to mention that there was only ever one class, first class, and a spare carriage was attached on the rear of the train for stock workers and their families, most of whom were Aborigines. Once arriving at the mission Edwards reported that,

most of my time [was] spent learning about the rations and cooking. Some of the native women cook for those who work at the station plus the children and mother with young children...also the old women who earn their food by spinning wool.

In the same letter he indicated that the Commonwealth tuberculosis survey had recently visited Ernabella and about 58 natives [were] to go up...[to Alice Springs]. The superintendent and I are taking about 25 men to be...[x-rayed] next Tuesday...the rest will go the following week.

Edwards quickly adjusted to mission life.

1. Edwards, Ibid., ff.
2. Bill Edwards' Letter No 1, 'Train between Port Pirie and Adelaide', The Private Correspondence of Rev. W.M.Edwards, dated Tuesday May 1958, p.1, (these letter were photocopied by me for my use, with the the author’s verbal permission and they may be viewed in the AIATSIS in Canberra under the above title).
3. Ibid., 'Letter No., 2' dated Wednesday 7th May 1958.
A year later, May 1959, Edwards was busy with picnics in the nearby bush with other staff members (Sister Val Ramm and Win Hilliard, the craft supervisor). He visited Alice Springs by himself. People visited him at Ernabella such as the policeman from Oodnadatta, Walter McDougall (the Native Patrol Officer from Woomera) together with members of MacDougall’s family and other officials of government. Also the routine of preaching Sunday services, supervising the cooking for communal feeding of children or relieving sick staff made up a full year’s program. He saw no reason to discuss the theoretical aspects of life at Ernabella with his parents. While the accounts he sent to them in reply to their letters were descriptive in his first full year at Ernabella, they were free of complex issues of religion, Protection Board policy, or mission philosophy and directions. Soon, Edwards became immersed in mission life, delivering stores to Aboriginal groups who had moved deeper into the desert. Some groups numbered about 120 and they moved annually to the south western part of the reserve collecting ‘dingo scalps’.

6.5.3. Outstations

Dingo scalping by Aboriginal groups developed into petty trading. It was a contradictory process: money was paid by the missionaries to the scalpers, who then paid back the money to the mission for food. Moreover, it appears that Edwards, like other missionaries, felt that they were aiding traditional practices. Mission life took on the appearance of compatibility between missionaries and Aborigines but the community was divided in two. Some appreciation of mission life may be gained from Edwards’ comment on activities on Christmas day 1959 when he wrote that everything went off very well at Christmas time. On the morning of Christmas Eve the manager of Kenmore Park station arrived...with the bullock. After dinner everyone went down by foot, camel, horse and donkey to a creek bed two miles south....The children had organised games, the men and girls played football and basketball respectively and the old men had some spear throwing. Then we lined them up in their groups and gave them supper: a piece of damper; a piece of bullock, sugar and tea, and an orange or apple - also a cake of soap and a small gift from the Mission boxes.

In a missionary drive to cut costs most of the Aboriginal groups were encouraged to leave the mission. This enforced migration away from Ernabella was euphemistically called 'holidays' by Edwards. It was not that he had any antagonistic feelings towards the 'dingo-scalper' but it provided both a way for mission costs to be reduced and for mission staff to be kept in contact with the various groups - 'their Aborigines'. Some groups went only five miles and others went upwards of thirty miles from Ernabella but were still supplied with rations. It was about this time that the Presbyterians were beginning to seek ways of explaining the problems of high concentrations of Aboriginal groups living in one location and the rising costs operating missions with such large Aboriginal populations.

6.5.4. The Ernabella Mission and 'outstations': 1960-79

By 1950 the missions administering welfare to Aborigines were attempting to rationalise their operations by centralising the administration. The process was continued throughout the 1950s when federal funding under Menzies provided funding for welfare and for education. As social dislocation heightened and the concomitant criticism forced the church and governments to re-evaluate their programs the rhetoric of 'outstations' was adopted as an answer to the criticisms. The outstation movement looked as though it was an idea which had come directly from the Aborigines themselves. It was assumed that these bush camps were customary ways of coping with the chaos of the mass living arrangement. The idea, however, was not a new one and was borrowed by the missions from the cattle industry in order to keep mission administration costs down. The cattle industry used the strategy for two reasons: first, to escape the costs of providing proper housing for Aboriginal stock workers, second, to keep their Aboriginal labour away from the homesteads especially on very large properties (see Plate 27 above for an example of an early type of bush camp which was a prototype for Aboriginal fringe-camps).


1. Ibid., p.3-6.

photo of stock camp in Flinders Ranges, 1931

first camp at Ettalowie Gap in the Flinders Ranges (1931).

From this photo (taken in the 1930s by a white stockman) depicts a stock-worker's bush camp. This form of bush camp was later called an 'outstation' which became a cheap form of bush dwelling. This is a good example of a stockman's camp, which was adapted by, or imposed upon, Aborigines, as a way of living cheaply in permanent camps in the bush.

Source: Ruhem, op.cit, pp. 50-51.
The Ernabella population was dwindling and operating funds were becoming difficult to raise. The Aborigines Protection Board report indicated that in June 1960 Ernabella had a population of 400. Edwards, who was the Acting Superintendent of Ernabella, reported to the Protection Board that the granting of old age pensions presented problems. Neither Edwards nor the Board elaborated on what this meant. This criticism was strange because apart from the idea that people could gain some independence from mission institutional life, there was the prospect of people remaining away from the mission for longer periods of time. The small amounts of money used to operate the mission was something stressed by Edwards. In 1961 Rev. V.W. Coombes of the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions wrote that,

the people liked what they experienced and observed. This was something different. Soon many realised that the missionaries with their many expert skills were there solely to help them. So they gave their trust. There were things in the store which they needed. So they brought in dingo scalps and received for each about [one pound sterling] worth of goods, priced at little above landed cost. Its fame spread. An Aboriginal worker on a cattle station brought his cheque two hundred miles to buy at Ernabella Store. The aged and infirm, needy mothers and little children were rationed freely when need arose and none went hungry any more.

A lot of these remarks were exaggerations of what really happened. Rev. Coombes failed to mention an incident when there had been a mass migration northwards in the late 1940s. Nor did he mention the increasing dependency of the Pitjantjatjara upon the missionaries and the way that costs of services were about to change mission policy to keep people permanently on land that was not traditionally their own. Still, in the 1960s, the

1. APB 'Annual Report 1960', op. cit., p.10. Bill Edwards mentioned tape 1, 2630, 1/1/12, that, '...they operated Ernabella...[on a] very small [budget with]...no Federal or State fund[ing]....'
2. Rev. V.W. Coombes, Ernabella And Fregon Outstation, Central, Australia, Australian Presbyterian Board Of Missions, Sydney, p.3. (According to Bill Edwards, this paper was produced about 1961 and is now in AIATSIS Canberra).
rhetoric was limited to the idea that ...they have been essentially a people on their own homeland, merging naturally with its contours and conditioned by its capricious vastness....' With these words Coombes was celebrating the permanence of the Presbyterian mission tenure on the land they leased adjacent to the northern reserve.

While this was taking place, the Protection Board’s report for 1960 was able, in one brief line, to signal the new welfare capitalism. The substance of the policy was that expenditure was to be repaid from profits collected from projects run by the missionaries from government funds outlaid on race policy. Amata cattle project embodied this policy in which

the board [was] grateful that the Government ha[d] approved of the appointment of staff for the Cattle Project which it

is intended to commence next...year....

The person appointed to head the project was James Vickery.

Vickery was the son of a dairy farmer from Mylor in the Adelaide hills. The Vickery family had a long association with the Mylor region as an early nineteenth century pioneering lease-holding family. He was an experienced station property manager in areas such as the Strezlecki track, in Queensland and the Oodnadatta region. On April 20 1961 Vickery arrived with his wife and family at Musgrave Park or Amata to establish a large cattle station on the North West Aboriginal Reserve and commence a training program for Aboriginal stockmen.

A shortage of skilled labour for pastoral properties in the far north of the state forced the Playford government to provide for a training program. In part the blame lay with the mission

who simply assumed that Aborigines would work on pastoral leases. In part also the blame for the labour shortages lay with the local property owners, who always looked to the state to provide a cheap supply of labour. Added to this was the fact that Aborigines coming from the bush were unable to speak English. This was important to the property owners who wanted most of all for their orders to be obeyed. Here, according to Vickery, the Presbyterians were fully to blame because, '...concern in the 1950s [by Playford was that] the mission services at Ernabella were not achieving what the government desired....' and the mission processes were tending '...to imprison the Aborigines at Ernabella. They became persona non grata to the local pastoral industry because they couldn’t speak English....' The language problem was not the only hurdle. As the government moved to bring in the Aboriginal labour training project at Musgrave Park (later named Amata) over-population emerged as a major problem.

Five Aboriginal groups were brought from Ernabella to live and work permanently at Musgrave Park. Within about three months the Aboriginal population had risen to 200. The development of the cattle station took about three years and the enterprise only ever reached self-sufficiency rather than becoming a profitable enterprise. The training program proved unsuccessful because as technological change came to the pastoral industry it led to the redundancy of Aboriginal labour. The cattle property and training program soon forced a retreat to a policy of providing a welfare outpost. This was dealt with in a unique way because of '...a problem with over-population, we had too many Aborigines the circumstances '...I encouraged these people to return... to the Tomkinson Ranges....' Vickery suggesting that he visit them ‘...every week and trade their dingo scalps and artifacts.....’ This was a satisfactory arrangement which, according to Vickery, enabled them ‘...to go back out there and take up the threads of their traditional way of life and ceremonials....’ By the third year of his management the population had grown to 500 residents, and it was this group that he was attempting to return to areas away from the station.

If Vickery knew then what he now claimed he was doing - he said he was the real creator of outstations - the Department of

1. Vickery, Ibid., ff.
2. Ibid., ff.
3. Ibid., ff.
Aboriginal Affairs annual report in 1964 did not reflect an understanding of his actions. The Protection Board reports of the early 1960s were still reflecting a basically protectionist approach with the added variation of introducing development, to provide employment in the form of 110 cattle, a dam for water and fence building projects. No mention of outstations was included in the new department’s annual report for 1966. At the same time as the Liberal Country League government lost office, 300 people were camped at Musgrave Park, 250 cattle made up the herd, an electricity generator provided light for the house while flats for employees were either under construction or had been completed. In addition, a welfare officer had been appointed and a school had opened. Surplus Aboriginal male labour was being sent to the Murray area to pick fruit and north to Darwin for extended working trips.

6.6. The rise of Dunstan and race reform policies


The first concern of the Walsh government was that the state’s legislative program be dovetailed with the federal Labor Opposition reform program. This included part of an International Labour Organisation convention relating to indigenous and tribal populations. On 17 February 1967 the South Australia government informed the federal government that it wished the convention to be signed by Australia. This made discrimination on a range of issues illegal in South Australia.

The second item on Walsh’s legislative program was land reform. The 1967 Department of Aboriginal Affairs annual report

1. James Vickery, Ibid., ff.
3. South Australia, Report Of The Aboriginal Affairs Board For Year Ending 30th June 1964, AGPS, Adelaide, 1965. (This report may be sighted at AIATSIS, Canberra).
specified that the Act had given '...recognition to Aboriginal land rights...' and, according to Dunstan, it was '...the first legislation by any State Government in this field....'

Neither Walsh nor Dunstan articulated in any detail how the government defined land rights. In a speech in parliament on December 1, 1966, Dunstan did spell out why there was a historic need for South Australia to restate the nineteenth century commitment to the colonial proclamation of 19 February 1836. Dunstan, however, never revealed the humanism which underpinned his new attempt both to redistribute land to Aboriginal people and to emancipate them from legislation which effectively prevented them from entering South Australian society.

Aboriginal identity lacked a uniform understanding throughout the state. To bypass this problem Dunstan overlapped the Aboriginal Lands Trust Act 1966, with Aboriginal Affairs Act 1976-67, to provide for reserve councils to represent communities on the Trust. But, there were no councils in the northern reserves. Dunstan's ambiguous view of Aboriginal identity (due mainly to his familiarity of urban groups only) did not emerge fully till sometime later.

Dunstan's policies derived from his own humanism as a trained lawyer versed in the Declaration of Human Rights 1949, and from that process in which the Australian Labor Party had a historic attachment. With the assent of the Aboriginal Lands Trust Act 1966-67, on the 8 December 1966 was sealed the problem which would eventually force further land reforms. Some would involve Dunstan, others would not. In short the problem was built into the workings of the Lands Trust legislation itself.

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1. SA-DAA, Ibid., ff.
5. R.Chapman, 'Aborigines And Australian Politics: How Do You Explain The Development Of Land Rights In South Australia', an unpublished paper in Political Science ANU, October 1987, p.2. (This paper may be sighted at the AIATSIS Canberra). See also, Dunstan, 'Felicia', op.cit., pp.42-46.
The Lands Trust was a body created to hold, control and administer land on behalf of South Australian Aboriginal people. 1

The 1966 and the 1973 Acts did not define what was meant by the term Aborigine. The members of the Trust consisted of a Governor’s nominee two other appointees and the secretary of the state Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The Trust would be able to grow when and if communities requested that the Trust own the land on which they lived.

When outlining the Aboriginal Lands Trust Bill in Parliament in 1966, the Chief Secretary said that the Bill was taking a significant step in the treatment of Aboriginal people and, in that state, Aborigines were now having land reserved for them. He also said that negotiations with Aboriginal reserve councils as well as residents of small reserves had begun. Furthermore, Trust members had visited reserves to enable the councils to consider the issues of transferring lands to the Trust which, although currently staffed and operated by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, it would in the future be owned, staffed and operated by the Trust.

Even as the Chief Secretary was speaking, 27 areas of land were being considered for inclusion, but only ten had been admitted as reserved land by 1969. The Trust legislation made special provision preventing the transfer of northern reserves to non-Aboriginal persons without the consent of parliament. For reasons which will become clear below, this action by parliament still failed to give powers directly to the Trust to act as a custodian for the northern reserve.

One important factor in the success of the reforms introduced by the Walsh government was that they relied upon the prospect that federal funding for Aboriginal economic and social programs would be forthcoming. This in turn depended upon the success of the referendum being planned for 1967. Federal funding would help solve the financial difficulties of both the missions and the South Australian government.

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2.Chief Secretary, Copy of original document see DAA file 87/174, 'Aboriginal Lands Trust of SA', pp.1-6.
3.Ibid., p.1.
4.Ibid., p.5.
6.7. Federal authorities and Aboriginal consciousness: 1967 to 1979

The 1967 Referendum, among other things, provided for the federal government to make special laws for Aborigines. Much of the state Labor Party's policy were designed to attract funds from federal grants. Once the federal administrative machinery was established in 1968 three important developments followed as new relationships were forged between the new federal office, the state welfare agencies and the missions. First, the federal authorities developed their own way of defining who was an Aborigine; second, the funding arrangements would be provided either through the state administration or directly to Aboriginal communities; third, the federal government and its administrative machinery were able to exert influences directly upon the way communities were developing.

The 1967 federal referendum provided the federal government with powers which only the states once held. In order to understand who was to receive the new benefits the federal authorities had to provide a new definition of whom they regarded as an Aborigine, and as such, a new identity for Aborigines. Barrie Dexter, the director of the federal Office of Aboriginal Affairs, suggested that 'In successfully advocating at the outset of its existence that the Government should agree that all persons of Aboriginal descent who considered themselves Aboriginal should be so regarded...'. The Council for Aboriginal Affairs, Dexter mentioned, was influenced by Professor Charles Rowley in that Aborigines in remote areas were regarded as '...tradition-oriented ..., to a greater or lesser degree, [and who had retained] their basic social structure....' Also important to the Council was the retention of '...at least 1 elements of their languages, oral literature and traditions....' The Council also insisted that they employ their own management 2 staff. It was clear that Dr Coombs was attempting to spell out to the Presbyterians, and the Church in general, a Commonwealth Government policy which had been developing since 1968.


2. Ibid., folio 42, p.2.
The Presbyterians, as did all the church mission bodies, found difficulty in accepting the idea that they were no longer needed to control the lives of reserve residents. It was some years, in this case, before the Presbyterian authorities were fully able to accept the reality of their redundancy. Rev. R.J. Denham of the Presbyterian Board of Missions pointed out that '...[at Ernabella] incorporation as a Housing Society was nearing determination and the incorporation of other enterprises, such as the cattle, were being considered....' Several individuals, Denham went on to say, had been assisted to establish their own businesses, e.g., as a baker and water boring contractor.

Coombs also observed that it was not even necessary to wait for proof that, '...evidence of a clear intention to incorporate was sufficient for their purposes for the negotiations of requests for funds....' The meeting concluded with the Presbyterians being left in no doubt that funds could be obtained from federal authorities if: an Aboriginal community was incorporated or intended to become so; the Aboriginal body had an appropriate form of land tenure or an intention to gain a lease; and the incorporated community or the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions acting for the community sought the appointment of a business manager.

The underlying tension between the federal body and the Presbyterians was elaborated by Dr Coombs as follows:

The Council was concerned about the whole situation of missions and settlements and was proposing a complete study...[of them]. The long delays in the transfer of responsibility to Aboriginal communities was a matter for concern, particularly regarding settlements. Council believed that the whole community could be incorporated for a wide variety of purposes immediately.

Despite Coombs' frustration, the 1972 political economic and social circumstance would, nevertheless, change at Ernabella.

Dunstan returned to office as premier in 1972. In November

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1. J. Denham, 'Notes of Meeting Between Dr H.C. Coombs, Mr. F. Moy and Miss J. Cooper, of the Office Of Aboriginal Affairs and Messrs. S.G. Edenborough and R.J. Denham - Sydney 15.9.71. Reports of meeting on OAA file 69/208, see folios 160 to 168 (f 168 is covering letter from Reverend R.J. Denham to Director of OAA).
2. Miss J. Cooper 'notes on meeting 5.9.72.', Ibid., p.1.
3. Ibid., p.2.
4. Ibid., p.2.
of the same year the Whitlam Labor government was elected to federal office. And by December 1973, the newly constituted Board of Ecumenical Mission and Relations (BOEMAR) wrote to Dexter saying that

BOEMAR should now plan for a transfer of administration of enterprises to the Ernabella and Fregon incorporated bodies, applicable from the 1 January 1974.

It was Dunstan who came up with what he thought was a totally new land rights strategy. He asked Whitlam to refer the land rights question, involving the Pitjantjatjara groups, to the Commissioner inquiring into land rights, Justice Woodward.

My argument, to this point, shows that Dunstan inherited from Playford a situation which changed very little. Dunstan was the driving force of reform even before he was elected to lead South Australia either as part of a Labor team in 1956 or as the Premier in 1972. The reforms he originally introduced were partly created within South Australia. By 1972, however, when he was returned to office, he relied upon outside ideas which came, in part, directly from the Pitjantjatjara Working Group’s and, in part, Woodward’s land rights recommendations. The remaining processes focused attention on the strength of the federal bodies, Labor and Liberal, to impose its own interest upon Aborigines by way of a system of direct dialogue with the northern Aboriginal groups. Equally important was, as we will become clear, that the Presbyterian’s interests and Aboriginal interests were to become indistinguishable.

6.7.1. The Woodward Inquiry and Pitjantjatjara land title

Aboriginal identity formed the central feature of the problem referred by Dunstan to Woodward. On the one hand, the second Dunstan Labor administration lacked a new Aboriginal affairs policy. On the other hand, the Presbyterian and Lutheran church mission bodies did not want to be stripped of their religious role. Writing on the subject and reflecting on the past, Rev. Bill Edwards exposed the Presbyterians’ antagonism to

the idea that people in urban areas could represent the interests of northern groups. He wrote some time later that '...the first official recognition came with the passing of the South Australian Lands Trust Act 1966...' In the Pitjantjatjara area the reaction to the passing of this Act, he went on, '...when members of the land trust, who were part-Aboriginal people from the southern parts of the state, visited the area the Pitjantjatjara people did not identify with them....'

The importance of Edwards' evidence comes into sharp focus in his comments that

Further impetus to the land rights movement was given by the appointment by Prime Minister Whitlam of Mr. Justice Woodward in 1973....Until this time approaches to government or other authorities by Pitjantjatjara people were mediated through government departments and Church bodies.

His crucial piece of evidence, however, was his observation that '...[The Pitjantjatjara] lacked a forum through which they could voice united political aspirations....' They were beginning to assume authority, Edwards indicated, and '...through local community councils....' There was no legitimate '...structure through which they could be educated about the need for asserting their claim to title for all Pitjantjatjara....'

In any event Woodward triggered a process during 1976-79 which saw both Dunstan and the Pitjantjatjara Council shift ground on land rights. In this three year period direct negotiations began on land entitlements. At the same time provision for subsidies to help Aborigines to maintain their customary obligation to the land whereby an agreement was made between the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the South Australian authorities and the Pitjantjatjara Council. Woodward's representative visited the northern reserved lands and, according to Rev. Edwards, '...[the Pitjantjatjara] would have been surprised at any suggestions that in fact the land was not their own....' A similar comment came from Richard Trevena who was the manager of Musgrave Park, or Amata. Trevena commented that

3. Ibid., p.296.
4. Ibid., p.297.
the people at Amata had very recent experiences with white people... best summed up by an old bloke who spoke to me about the return of the land when the Tonkin Government handed back the title. He could not understand why the government was returning it to them because he had never left it and so he could not understand how they could hand back something which had never left him.

To Trevena the old Aboriginal man was right. 'I thought like a pastoralist... but... even without thinking like a pastoralist [of] land management practices at the correct time.' In this sense, Trevena concluded, Aborigines from the northern areas of South Australia were never evicted from the land in the same way as, for example, the Ceduna people had been.

6.8. Ian Viner, the NWAR and the SA Aboriginal Lands Trust

Rev. Bill Edwards' view of the earlier Dunstan reform - in relation to the establishment of the Aboriginal Lands Trust - formed the view closest to reality of how white people saw southern persons of mixed Aboriginal descent. When Ian Viner became federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the Fraser government he was soon embroiled in the same contradiction. The Lands Trust (as elaborated above) was empowered by the South Australian Aboriginal Lands Trust Act 1966-73 Act, to acquire land with the approval of people who were living on the particular area of land and with consent of the Minister. Dunstan prevented (or stalled) the prospects of the Lands Trust developing close ties with Pitjantjatjara groups. Edwards' fear of the Trust over control of the northern reserves was a real one. When Viner entered into the conflict he indicated that '... the policy of my Department [is] to encourage people to... run their own affairs....' Viner's view of the transfer of control from mission appointed staff to the Aboriginal community, at Ernabella (and also with Yalata), as progressive action. He concluded by saying, '... in the case of Fregon, the control of --

2. Trevena, Ibid., ff.
3. Ibid., ff.
Plate 28

photograph of Pitjantjatjara Council

Source, Mattingley and Hampton (eds.), op.cit., p.78.
the cattle project is vested in a very competent Aboriginal, Albert Lennon...'. Both Viner and Edwards were pleased with the outcome. Viner, on the one hand, was pleased that Aborigines of a traditional conservative nature would control the land. Edwards, on the other hand, was pleased because there were Christian Aborigines who would support a continuing presence of the Presbyterian church in the region.

These were the kinds of attitudes missionaries, administrators, politicians and Aborigines held towards the prevailing social economic and political events which were taking place around them on or near the northern reserved lands during the mid-1970s.

By July 1976 the conflict between the Lands Trust, the Presbyterians and the federal and state authorities was beginning to create new prospects of dealing with a new Aboriginal body. The Ernabella missionaries, similar to other mission bodies, had historically protected the Mission's self-interest in the way it endeavoured to create a Christian community on the northern reserves. In addition, the missionaries ensured that people of 'full-descent' would not be under the political influence of people who were not regarded as Aborigines at all. The federal authorities' influence was encouraged by Dunstan because of his party's policy vacuum in relation to Aborigines during the beginning of his second premiership and for funds to operate the policies. The federal bodies were responsible for the building of an authority structure for Aborigines with whom it could have continuous dialogue. Viner wanted to ensure that Dunstan's structures were first weakened. The operations of the new body, the Pitjantjatjara Council, was an important manifestation of the raising of Aborigines' consciousness. The Council's creation, however, brought with it responsibilities with which the Pitjantjatjara Council could not always cope.


Although Edwards believed that possession and ownership of land were the driving forces behind the formation of the

1 R.I.Viner (Ministerial No., 116), 'Letter: Viner to Jessop re complaints from Mr. Fuller of de Rose Hill, dated, 10 March 1976', see 'Ernabella - SA, DAA File No., 87/123, folios 127-130.
Pitjantjatjara Council, other issues such as health of the community, radio communication, roads, children and young people’s employment were all on the agenda at the first meeting of July 13-14 1976. It was natural that most meetings were dominated by discussions concerning land because this was being motivated by the Dunstan Government’s policy priority in relation to Aboriginal Affairs. By July 1977 the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, other government and community agencies were attending meetings specifically related to the provision of health services.

In August 1977 Viner met with the Pitjantjatjara Council at Amata. At that meeting he pointed out the range of issues, other than land, that were raised by various communities. For example, he reported that ‘...[he and the Council] talked this morning about work and wanting wages instead of unemployment money....’ At that meeting Dr Coombs raised the question of land rights. It is possible that Aborigines may not have wanted to raise the issue at that exact moment, and that Coombs was used to raising such issues with Ministers. It is equally possible to argue that land rights was as important to Presbyterian Church representatives like Rev. Edwards who wanted to keep a Presbyterian interest on the reserve, or to people like Dr Coombs, whose own raisons d’etre in the region depended also upon the promises of land materialising.

Three important factors relating to the maturation of Aboriginal consciousness need to be appreciated. Firstly, the outside world was controlling the Pitjantjatjara’s social relations. In the period from 1977 (when the body was incorporated) to 1979 the tasks the Council set itself were beginning to force it to restructure itself in order to cope with demands from Canberra, Adelaide, Port Augusta, Warburton, Yalata, and Ernabella. In short, the Pitjantjatjara Council was no different from any other modern political organisation in

2. Ibid., p.1.
3. Ibid., p.3.
responding to the social, economic and political environment in which it found itself.

In the 29 years 1950-79 two significant changes in social relations had occurred in the region. On the one hand, in 1950, social relations were restricted to coping with an environment which consisted of the bush communities, the mission, cattle station communities and the nearest town pastoral service centres. On the other hand, in 1979, social relations had been expanded to include interests, and people, from Canberra, Adelaide and other centres. These new social relations encompassed contacts with the southern Pitjantjatjara groups and other groups in the region which included pastoral and mining interests. As expansion continued the people experienced increasing pressure from the outside world. Pressures materialised as land and capital began to influence the social relations in unexpected ways.

The outstation movement - a second question relating to the maturation of Aboriginal consciousness - was a church and government strategy that began to show signs of failure even in 1979. As early as 1975, which was one year prior to the Pitjantjatjara Council’s formation, there were signs that the outstation movement was already floundering. The overriding problem was that the movement away from large centralised administrative organs like missions and reserve service centres arose as an administrative strategy to reduce criticisms by outsiders and to cut the costs to mission and government of centralising Aboriginal groups on government reservations. Similarly, the reason for moving to new living sites was mainly to avoid problems from alcohol. A survey conducted by Dr Les Hiatt concluded ‘...[that] the consumption of alcohol is now widespread [in] Aboriginal settlements....’ The result, Hiatt wrote, was that excessive consumption of alcohol ‘...leads to fighting. [And] several respondents identified this development as a main motive for the formation of outstations....’

Plate 29

Two types of camps in northern South Australia.
Source: K. Tamura, op.cit., p.76, and Figure 4-3: Working on artefacts at a dry river bed after collecting river-red gum roots.

Source: National Trachoma Report.
Hiatt identified a number of reasons why people from all over Australia had come to see that creating outstations was the '...real Aboriginal thing to do....' In 1962 the Rev. Coombes of the Presbyterian Board of Missions perceived that the movement had its roots in the Aboriginal metaphysical perspective of the world. Writing on outstation development, in 1979, Edwards recalled that '...1961 was a significant year [because until then] Ernabella was the only settlement in the area....[where the]...population increase, drought, limited development and the diminishing firewood and water supplies...' were causes underlying '...[the] decentralisation[ation of the mission groups,] and had been been under discussion [by the Presbyterian Mission Board]....' Moreover, he suggested that the creation of the Musgrave Park cattle station project was part of the Presbyterian Mission Board's strategy for decentralisation. That, as explained by Vickery earlier, was a distortion of the then state government's intentions.

Finally, in considering the maturation of Aboriginal consciousness, it is important to realise that the real questions concerning land reform had been formulated outside, and not inside, the region. The Woodward Commission recommendations provided a good example of the way outside forces influenced the consciousness of Aborigines in the region. Once the system of land transfer had been settled the big question of a new Aboriginal identity remained. How the Aboriginal identity was defined became important. The Aboriginal person was defined as a holder of traditional 'lore'. This was clear from the answer given to the Lands Trust:

Several delegates commented on the fact that the Aboriginal Lands Trust held land mainly for people who were part-Aboriginal and whose...[lore] had died. The Pitjantjatjara people still have their...[lore].

Emphasising the difference between the northern Aboriginal groups who held the lore, and the southern groups who did not, ensured

1.Rev., V.W.Coombes, 'outstations', op.cit., pp.1
that Gemeinschaft rather than Gesellschaft became the basis of both the new interpretation Aboriginal identity and the control of the Pitjantjatjara Lands Trust.

As the negotiations over the Pitjantjatjara lands suggested the Aboriginal people of the region had quickly learnt how competitive politics was, particularly when the stakes were so high for all concerned. The Pitjantjatjara had learnt partly from experience and partly by example. In the latter connection the example of their own supporters was instructive. Both their lawyers and their pastors had shown themselves to be highly manipulative, and in the background was, almost indistinguishable, the federal influences. The lawyers were

Phillip Toyne, Ross Howie and Andrew Collett. The pastors were Bill Edwards and Albert Lennon from Fregon, while the manifestation of federal interests were Ian Viner, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Dr H.C. Coombs, the Chairman of the Council for Aboriginal Affairs. It is possible that the Presbyterians were afraid of losing their tenure in the region if a non-religious body such as the Aborigines Lands Trust gained control of the land leasing arrangements. To avoid such an eventuality pastors, lawyers, administratos and politicians had readily resorted to vigorous politicing.

In the period from 1950 to the mid-1960s Aborigines were a rural people. They were made up of people of full-descent and people of mixed descent. In the 1960s, mostly people of mixed descent emigrated to urban areas in the region and to Adelaide. Urban migrants saw themselves as historically part of the northern and western Aboriginal groups. These northern and western Aboriginal groups were unable to articulate their traditional view. The Presbyterians and Lutherans did this for them, but it was a distorted perspective. The Church had a self-interest in viewing things differently. By the time the federal authorities introduced their new reforms to replace Dunstan’s old reforms the differences between the two groups had become a political issue. Aborigines in northern South Australia appeared to be different peoples who used as habitats not only the missions and government reserves in the region but also the local cattle properties in which they developed new customs to cope with their new environments. These groups came to the new habitats speaking languages such as the Pitjantjatjara,

Ngatjatjara and Yunguntjatjara. Through legislation the Church and the Aborigines Protection Board ensured that they remained in control of the people’s lives. These people had no effective body through which their interests could be expressed. But, from 1972 to 1979, other considerations preoccupied the people’s thinking as the Presbyterians and the government brought pressure on them to adapt to institutional changes.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

It was inconceivable that the pastoralists could have accepted Aborigines as their equals in 1950 - but by the end of the Dunstan reform period in 1979, pastoralists had been forced to accept Aborigines as their political and economic equals in land ownership. Socially, however, both groups still maintained a level of distrust that only the future could unravel.

Not just pastoralists, transport, service-people and miners but Aborigines as well participated in the historic process of transforming the pastoral dominance of 1950 into the newly created social relations of 1979. The process of change had begun at the turn of the century when Aborigines emigrated from their traditional Great Victoria Desert habitats to missions, pastoral properties, railway depots, small service towns and, finally, industrial centres. Demographic analysis along with ethnographic sources, oral evidence and epidemiological information has, in this thesis, indicated the strength of the historic role played by Aborigines.

At the same time, pastoral dominance intensified from 1950 until the end of Playford's premiership in 1965. This ensured that postwar economic prosperity remained with the landowners, their managers and the stock and station agents. But as wool, beef and grain prices fell and the markets receded so too did pastoral dominance. Pastoral dominance was also weakened by Playford's industrial development policies and by the rise of the state Labor Party, which won political office in late 1965. Although Playford had attempted to modify race relations he failed to emancipate Aboriginal labour. Failure to repeal the Welfare Board legislation prevented Aboriginal labour from gaining its fair share of the postwar economic prosperity and prohibited its mobility. Playford blamed the missions for the lack of progress in bringing Aboriginal labour into the market sooner.

In any event, Playford was able to promote the transport revolution to subsidise pastoral production. The Prime Minister, Robert Menzies went further by providing better roads to support the British weapons project at Woomera and Maralinga. Of further benefit to the region was the communication improvements resulting from the British project. Menzies was keen to provide direct protection of pastoral interests but ensured that Aborigines were kept clear of the area. At the same time, social service benefits were helping to move Aborigines away from
missions. An unforeseen consequence was the formation of fringe-camps in which Aboriginal poverty and naivety intensified the chaos of daily life. Fringe-dwellers created new forms of social relations to cope with the dislocation and disorientation confronting them.

Technological changes affected the social lives of mainly non-Aboriginal railway workers and their families, which increased the conflict between themselves and railway authorities. These changes, however, helped make subsidies available to pastoralists, through cheaper transport of rural production to market and cheap fares for rural passenger services. In turn, during the 1950s, the proximity to rail transport provided advantages to leasing arrangements all of which aided pastoral dominance over the interests of Aborigines, rail-workers and the coal and opal mining industries. The growing importance of opal mining in the 1960s brought to the region large numbers of immigrant miners, mainly Greeks and Yugoslavs. These immigrants constituted a new social group, together with Aborigines, which gave the Labor premier (Don Dunstan) political influence in the region where previously he had none. The re-routing of the railway in 1974-75, which favoured Aboriginal and mining interests rather than those of the pastoralists, symbolised the shift away from the pastoral culture to new forms of cooperation between the groups.

Social isolation affected small towns in the region as well as Whyalla. Residents in towns such as Leigh Creek, Cook and Marree found it difficult to develop and maintain satisfying social relations as people in large industrial towns like Whyalla. Life in small Aboriginal communities like Amata and Ernabella was no less alienating. The different forms of institutionalisation meant both different effects and different solutions, which manifested themselves as collective or individual action.

The migration of Aborigines from their desert habitats, the transport revolution and questions of Aboriginal alienation in fringe-camps, ensured that in such a dialectical process Aboriginal political, economic, social and cultural awareness would emerge. When Playford was re-elected to office in 1950 the daily lives of Aborigines were controlled by legislation and the mission authorities represented their own interests as being the interests of Aborigines. In 1958 the Stuart rape and murder case
took on an importance which marked the onset of the decline of Playford’s long occupation of the front benches of state parliament. Playford attempted to raise the importance of race questions by changing the name of the state authority which controlled the lives of Aborigines but it was too late. By 1965 race relations formed an important platform of the state Labor Party’s policies with which it won office. In the period from 1965 to 1972 a creative humanist reform program was initiated. Dunstan’s second term of office, from 1972 to 1979, was a period in which he implemented a new program of race relations which was formulated outside of the region and the state. The two periods 1965-70 and 1972-79 combined to produced a freeing-up of the mobility constraints on Aboriginal labour. This reform quickened the move from the fringe-camps into the urban industrial centres. In the process Dunstan’s image as a reformer was exposed as being less effective in the second term as it was in the first period. The creation of the Pitjantjatjara Council was an ostensibly liberal development, establishing a structure that has ensured the combined presence of state and federal authorities in the region. It is also a body designed to cement the political actions of Aborigines into Australian political culture.

The three decades 1950-70 were a period of transformation for the northern region of South Australia. All of the region’s inhabitants were drawn into the process of change. The pastoralist was changed no less than the desert and fringe-dwelling Aborigines, the railway worker no less than the opal miner, the small town school teacher no less than the Whyalla steel worker. None escaped.
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### Total Census Population (1947)

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<th>Location</th>
<th>1947 Total Census Population</th>
<th>Full Blood Aborigines</th>
<th>Half-Caste Aborigines</th>
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<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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**TOTAL STUDY AREA**

- 16,623
- 13,151
- 29,774
- 198
- 155
- 353
- 396
- 372
- 768
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<td>(actually also incudes Whyalla)</td>
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<td>Woomera-Maralinga</td>
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Check: Total not incorporated | 20,701 | 15,335 | 36,036 |

20,701 4,579 13,191
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<td></td>
<td>Total census population</td>
<td>Full blood Aborigines</td>
<td>Half caste Aborigines</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>persons</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>female</td>
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<tr>
<td>EYRE PENINSULA STAT DIV</td>
<td>WESTERN STAT DIV</td>
<td>(actually also includes Whyalla)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>840</td>
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<td>WESTERN SD Unincorp</td>
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<tr>
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<td>56</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>630</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Flinders Rge unincorporated</td>
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<tr>
<td>REMAINDER OF STATE</td>
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Rates Of Blindness (in both eyes) In Aboriginal Populations in the northern area of study region South Australia in May/July 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. Blind</th>
<th>Total Seen</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indulkana*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mim/Ev'd*</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fregon*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernabella*</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amata*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipalyatjara*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,033</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follicles (grade 1, 2, and 3) In the Aboriginal Populations in the northern areas of the study region South Australia in May/July 1976

<table>
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<th>Under 11yrs</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indulkana*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mim/Ev'd*</td>
<td>26/39</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fregon*</td>
<td>33/98</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernabella*</td>
<td>47/164</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amata*</td>
<td>46/115</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipalyatjara*</td>
<td>28/62</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>239/574</strong></td>
<td><strong>41.63%</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Perforated Ears (Wet &/or Dry) In Aboriginal Populations in the northern areas of the study region South Australia in May/July 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Under 21yrs</th>
<th>Under 11yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indulkana*</td>
<td>29/95</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mim/Ev'd*</td>
<td>7/39</td>
<td>17.9</td>
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<td>46/98</td>
<td>46.9</td>
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<td>Ernabella*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pipalyatjara*</td>
<td>15/62</td>
<td>24.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>210/574</strong></td>
<td><strong>36.58%</strong></td>
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</table>

Source Material: Records from data collection forms of NTEHP sponsored by the Australian College of Ophthalmologists and funded by the Commonwealth Dept of Health under the National Health Insurance Act 1973. I acknowledge Prof.F.C.Hollows' both whose calculations from the field data forms I am relying upon and for providing access to the data which is now located in the NSW University Archives.

* The Asterisc indicates either an Aboriginal reserve or a community which was previously a church mission.
### AGE DISTRIBUTION OF ABORIGINALS SEEN, IN THE REGION OF STUDY REGION OF SA, BY NTEHP MAY/JUNE 1976:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE GROUPS</th>
<th>0-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50-59</th>
<th>60+</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1,997</td>
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<td>486</td>
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<td>4,341</td>
<td>3,187</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>717</td>
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<td>358</td>
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<td>10,588</td>
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<td>1,057</td>
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<td>289</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>3,372</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>2,267</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,620</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,308</strong></td>
<td><strong>814</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,236</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,957</strong></td>
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### AGE AND DISTRIBUTION OF NON-ABORIGINALS SEEN, IN REGION OF STUDY OF SA, BY NTEP MAY/JUNE 1976:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>0-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50-59</th>
<th>60+</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Zone 13</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>2,072</td>
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### EYE AND EAR SCREENING RESULTS, IN REGION OF STUDY SA, BY NTEP, MAY/JUNE 1967

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<th>Poor Vision</th>
<th>Perforated Ears</th>
<th>Follicles</th>
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**TOTALS:** 36 374 5 427 124 814 124 1372

Source material: Data collection forms of National Trachoma and Eye Health Program for May/July 1976 as sponsored by the Australian College of Ophthalmologists, and funded by the Commonwealth of Health under the provisions of the National Health Insurance Act 1973. I acknowledge Prof. F.C. Hollows' work whose calculation I am relying upon from the field data collection forms and for providing access to the data which is now located in the NSW University Archives.