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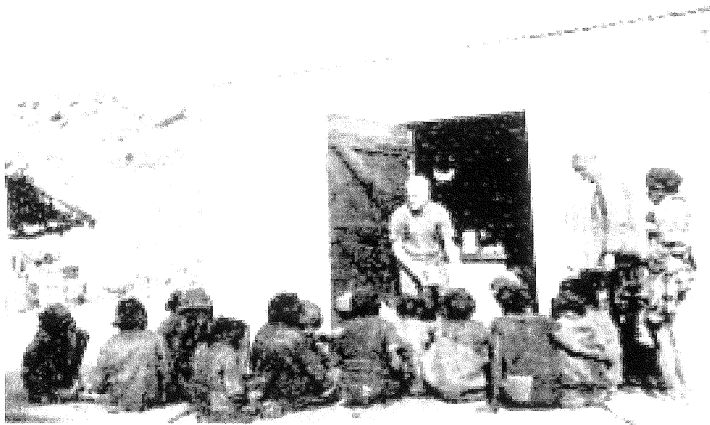
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**CONVERTING SALVATION: Protestant
Missionaries in Central Australia, 1930s-40s**

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CHAPTER TEN: 'We live from good soup'¹: Healing, Feeding and the Indigenous Body



The Ernabella missionaries wished to rescue the indigenous body from illness and disease, through medical and feeding mechanisms.

The original purpose of the mission venture at Ernabella had been 'a Medical Mission to the Aborigines'. Its founder was a doctor. Yet Love himself, as we have seen, was instrumental in rejecting the idea of a doctor based at the site since, he reasoned, a doctor would not be sufficiently occupied. Indeed while Love's 1937 diary represents 'blacks' as dirty, naked, unkempt, and occasionally diseased, they are also often seen at the same time as healthy and contented.² Warwick Anderson in his *The Cultivation of Whiteness* has traced the path of biomedical science in Australia from an environmental discourse (keeping the neighbourhood clean) to one focused primarily on hygienic white citizenship, with prohibitions on contact with 'unclean' minorities such as Aborigines and Asians. The missionaries provided an addendum to such discourses. They were concerned with the transfer of diseases but more with 'low whites', unclean and immoral, infecting the

¹ Levinas: 'We live from 'good soup', air, light, spectacles, work, ideas, sleep...these are not objects of representations. We live from them': Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 110. My use of the phrase 'good soup' is meant as a mixture, as a soup, if you like, of metaphorical and literal meanings, including 'ingredients' missionaries thought necessary for the indigenous Body; food, health, freedom from disease, work, cleanliness; it is also a reference to the 'soup' of goat's meat and garden vegetables by which the missionaries were convinced they were helping to keep the Aborigines alive. The 'soup' is referred to by all the members of the SA Aborigines Protection Board who visited Ernabella between 1943 and 1945: for example, Professor JB Cleland noted in his report of his 1945 visit that 'the bread seemed good, and the stew was thick and looked appetising': SA Records, "GRG 52/1": No 11 of 1945, Report of a visit to Ernabella in the Far North and North West of South Australia (Cleland); also see this chapter, below. The inset photograph is one of JRB Love distributing rations at Ernabella in August 1942 from the store, the locale of the underfeeding controversy. The photograph is from the Borgelt collection at the Ara Irititja Archives, Adelaide.

² Love did fashion representations of some gruesome images of disease and illness, which seemed more initially to reinforce his view of the 'primitivity' of Aboriginal people than raise concerns about their health, although the latter concerns seemed to develop through his time on the mission site: see above, chapter 7, and this chapter.

indigenous bodies with whom they came into contact. While 'contamination' from such quarters came to bear broader, more metaphorical associations, a physical, germ-bearing interpretation was certainly a component of the general missionary discourse. Love's vision of a semi-nomadic people, still hunting at leisure in the Ranges, kept separated from unclean white bodies and protected by the 'buffer' mission station as their base, may have precluded or at least diminished in his mind the necessity for an ongoing permanent medical presence. Aspirin and hot chocolate in the hands of a hospitable missionary may have seemed sufficiently good medicine.

epidemics

However, while Love had effectively discountenanced the permanent stationing of a doctor at Ernabella, missionary doctors did assist in temporary capacities. Duguid, of course, was a regular visitor to Ernabella, although more often, it seems, before and after Love's residency. 'Medical patrols', a favourite expression of the missionaries, imbued with Christian notions of the Good Samaritan and healing the sick, were conducted on occasions. Love himself went on a medical patrol of the Musgrave and Mann Ranges with Dr Davies in May-June 1942, along with Mrs. Love, their son, and two native men.³ However, medical facilities were scarce. Love's Logbook demonstrates the primitivity of the medical equipment:

There are five cases of pneumonia here at present in Dr. Davies' charge: 2 men, 3 women. They are camped besides the box which serves as a dispensary. This is not very desirable, but the best we can do till a proper hospital-dispensary building is up.⁴

Love characterizes nearly all the 'illnesses' occurring at Ernabella as 'epidemics'.

Epidemic of mumps is still going on...Also an epidemic of diarrhoea among babies. Several of these have recovered with the use of [?] and castor oil; some still ill. M, whom I brought back from where he had been taken to die, now has diarrhoea to add to his other troubles...This morning I gave one of his wives porridge for herself and children and damper for the sick husband. On going to see him I found the two women and three children

³ See SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 32 of 1942, Love's Report of Medical patrol of Musgrave and Mann Ranges, May-June 1942.

⁴ Love, "Logbook": 25 Sep 1942.

eating all the food and giving him none. I gave him a pot of rice and sat by while he ate it ravenously.⁵

While the mechanics of germ contagion were undoubtedly at work, it is hard not to see Love's epidemics as a way in which his 'medical discourse' was constructing and representing Aboriginal identity as 'savages' living too closely together in the 'sordid camps', in the squalor of the dirt, sharing food, sharing disease.⁶ Yet it was not all representation. Mundane comments in the Logbook mask what must have been traumatic events for the missionary and his 'patients': 'Last night the infant daughter of M. died: diarrhoea. The mother and the granny brought the baby, dying, yesterday afternoon; but not before it was too late.'⁷

By May 1943, Ernabella had a new but still rudimentary hospital-dispensary but the 'epidemics' continued to sweep the camp. The mission staff was not immune with Love and his small son becoming ill. Mrs. Love took over 'the sick call', giving bad cases 'aspirin and chocolate'.⁸ Soon after, in September 1943, a serious influenza epidemic hit Ernabella:

Sep 18...Tonight M. dies, of influenza, near workhouse, where several sick were camped. I thought she had been getting on well, and was shocked at her sudden collapse. Buried immediately, by young women about ¼ mile away. Sep. 19. Frightful wind and dust. Went around camp this morning with a bucket of cocoa and clinical thermometer. Found most of the patients apparently much better. Sep. 23...Two old women have died of flu. The camp apparently does not take much notice of death of old women, as camp site has not been moved. Oct 3...the influenza epidemic seems to have passed its peak. Total of 8 deaths, last one being on Sunday last. No new cases during the week. Half a dozen old people [still?] pretty sick. I have a second attack myself. Am giving cocoa, tea and milk to patients, as well as more rations.⁹

Medical help was available, and occasionally sought, via wireless from Alice

⁵ Ibid., 25 Oct 1942.

⁶ For a stimulating exposition of the ways Western biomedical discourse imposed meanings on the African body, see Megan Vaughan, *Curing their ills: Colonial Power and African illness* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991). Vaughan demonstrates that these constructions were often contradictory. This is also the case on occasion with Love who while constructing images of the sick amid the squalor, also rejoices (elsewhere) in the 'bright, happy, healthy' faces of Aboriginal people around him.

⁷ Love, "Logbook": 1 Nov 1942.

⁸ Ibid., 9 Sep 1943.

⁹ Ibid., 18, 19, 23 Sep, 3 Oct 1943.

Springs. On 7 January 1945, the Logbook noted:

A good many gone bush, including old N., who has a badly cut head after a fight. A piece, the size of a shilling, of skull was exposed. I had been giving treatment under advice from [doctor] at Alice Springs. Wound septic and horribly smelling. It will be interesting to learn if he recovers in the bush.¹⁰

Assistance also came from Flynn's Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) which wrote to Love about the 'desirability of each Outpost Station being in possession of a Standard Medicine Chest containing drugs, dressings and appliances which could be used by settlers under instructions within or 'over the air'.¹¹ Love duly advised the APB via Duguid and the necessary items were dispatched to Ernabella. Often in the early forties, Love would turn to Duguid for help with medical supplies. For example, in June 1943, during another 'epidemic of colds', Love advises Duguid that the mission is 'out of aspirin' and a thousand tablets were sent.¹² In March 1945, Love tells the doctor that 'we are in the midst of another epidemic of horrible colds, to which these people are so subject':

the moral effect of some medicine, to drink and rub in, is good for the blacks so it is well worth while using some...The people come in to dispensary in the morning and cough all over me, to show how bad they are, and treat my remonstrances as a good joke. Germ infection is something that they fail to believe.¹³

At other times, not even the moral qualities of medicines nor anything else could be of much help:

August 24 [1945]. Fri. Last evening word came in that J, husband of K, was very ill at [?]. [T?], the blind medicine man, and a number of schoolgirls and women, went out to his camp. This morning I went in the buckboard, with Mrs. Love, Mr. Henderson and Mr. Claude Henderson and [N?] to see if we could help him. We found the camp, with J just dying. As we could do nothing, we left the people, after a prayer.¹⁴

In 1945, the Board of Missions secured the services of a full-time nursing sister for the Mission Station. Love noted in the Logbook with discernible relief: 'Sister

¹⁰ Ibid., 7 Jan 1945.

¹¹ See SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 16 of 1943, RFDS to Love, n.d. (probably about April 1943).

¹² Ibid., Love to Duguid, 8 Jun 1943.

¹³ Ibid., No 11 of 1945, Love to Duguid, 19 Mar 1945.

¹⁴ Love, "Logbook": 24 Aug 1945.

Melba Turner arrived to take charge of medical work here.¹⁵ Love had always preferred to take the burden of 'working with the blacks' on his own shoulders, to rely in the end on his own expertise, and on the segregation of indigenous bodies from white sources of contamination. He had begun his association with Ernabella by using his massive authority within the Presbyterian Church to defeat the proposal for a 'medical mission'. At the end of his term, he admitted to Matthews in his valedictory letter that procuring the nursing sister was 'the best forward move Ernabella has had for a long time. Ernabella is fortunate to get a woman of her experience and balance to inaugurate this very important part of the work.' He remembered wondering whether there would be enough work at the site for a medical person, and commented: 'she is making it a full-time job!'¹⁶ Love concluded that 'so far she has not lost a case through death' and predicted that she would be 'of enormous benefit' to the Mission.¹⁷ It was as close to an admission of error that the stubborn missionary ever made. Perhaps he accepted in the end the medicalization of the mission site as not only another demonstration of the superiority of European civilization over the world of the savages and their 'epidemics', but as a further, and better, way of 'saving the blacks' than cocoa and milk.

the starving of the Aborigines

Indigenous bodies were also to be rescued from starvation. Feeding the indigenous body was becoming synonymous with saving the indigenous body. The centrality for the Aborigine of food, and the land from which the food ultimately came, began also to impose itself on the missionaries who had positioned themselves in Paul Carter's 'lie of the land', in the folds and textures of the aboriginal Earth itself. The Central Australian missionaries were convinced that the nation was 'starving' its indigenous population out of

¹⁵ Ibid., 26 Nov 1945.

¹⁶ With the advent of a trained medical presence on the mission site, the requests to the APB for medical supplies become much more sophisticated and comprehensive. For example, on 12 December 1945, Sister Turner (through Duguid) requests an order for: Flavogel; Sulphanilimide powder; milk of magnesia; silver nitrate solution; zinc sulphate eye drops; mercurochrome; Vaseline; cough mixture; cotton wool; bandages; enamel basins; sandsoap; medicine glasses; a scalpel; morphine; MSA; strychnine; oil of cloves; barrier cream: SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 11 of 1945, Turner to Duguid, 12 Dec 1945.

¹⁷ Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1946": Love to Matthews, 12 Mar 1946.

existence. Duguid and Albrecht in their 1939 trek had noted the terrible paucity of Aborigines in the Petermann Ranges.¹⁸ One of Albrecht's most vivid and repeated images in his writings is that the bullock had always taken precedence over the Aborigine in Australia: the two could not coexist in an ecological sense; they required the same ground, the same waterholes, the same space. Space, water, ground were the pastoralists' currency from which they created wealth and power, and it was not until indigenous Australians bartered some of their traditional life for an accommodation with the pastoralists that coexistence with cattle in their own country became a possibility.¹⁹ Albrecht accepted this possibility and even saw it as an opportunity for Aborigines forced (or desiring) to abandon their traditional life.²⁰ But Duguid and Love were placing an immense premium on the retention of country on which indigenes could pursue a traditional existence, protected by the 'buffer' mission station, until they were ready for entry into the white world.

rationing

Mission stations were often sites of rationing, where indigenous bodies were fed, clothed and blanketed on behalf of the state. Tim Rowse has deftly characterized the 'pervasive colonial practice of rationing' as a technique designed to substitute peaceful relations for violence as a mode of governance in Central Australian colonial relations.²¹ As such a technique, rationing was of course attractive to missionaries, who, in Levinasian terms, 'had not come to kill'. When

¹⁸ Presbyterian, "Proceedings, GAA, 1939": Report on 'Ernabella Medical Patrol' (Duguid), p. 150: 'It was learnt from the natives...that last year many natives died of starvation west of the Mann Ranges. When conditions became serious in the Petermann country, many of the natives went north-east into the cattle stations, and as far as Alice Springs on the line. Others stayed on, and in the end made for the Mann Ranges in South Australia, but they arrived too weak to search for food, and died around the waterholes. These people died not of disease, but of starvation in Australia in the year 1938.'

¹⁹ See Ann McGrath's classic exposition of this accommodation in *'Born in the Cattle'*.

²⁰ Note, however, that Albrecht saw the cattle station as an 'opportunity' for indigenous Australians who had been forced to abandon completely their traditional life. In one of the many papers he wrote during his long career as a Central Australian missionary, covering many aspects of black-white relationships, he commented: 'Employment at cattle stations is and remains still the biggest opportunity, and the most congenial work for Natives.' The congeniality, for Albrecht however, was not in the possibility of combining this employment with the retention of some traditional life, as McGrath suggests in *Born in the Cattle* but that in the relationship with the station 'boss' and foreman, Aboriginal workers would learn 'responsibility' and 'become very useful': see Albrecht, "Albrecht Material", in Lutheran Archives: Employment of Aborigines on Cattle Stations, n.d., possibly about mid-1950s.

²¹ Rowse, *White flour, white power*, pp. 7, 63.

Ernabella was established in 1937, the South Australian Government also designated it as a Ration Depot where government rations could be distributed to eligible natives. The mechanism of a rationing store on the mission site also allowed the Mission to pre-empt the notorious white 'doggers' – men who exploited Aborigines by buying dingo skins cheaply from Aborigines and selling dearly to the State – by paying the Aborigines directly for the scalps either in cash or in kind, usually flour, jam, tea, or tobacco available at the store.²² Rationing thus also provided a 'buffering' mechanism as protection against 'low whites', against corrosive elements in Western civilisation, as well as a technique of feeding the Aborigines.

Yet this notion of feeding '(Aboriginal) men without food' is not necessarily a simple one.²³ There was undoubtedly a humanitarian aspect to rationing, an act of Levinasian responsibility by the missionaries to 'keep the blacks alive', as well as some compensation (meagre by any measure) by government for the irruption of white pastoral industry into indigenous lands, disrupting native game and foodstuffs.²⁴ There was also the desire to attract Aborigines to the mission by the provision of goods and foods desired by them, an incentive to bring indigenous bodies to the Mission. The mission needed indigenous bodies to be a Mission. While the structured distribution of food did redress a grievance, and address a need, it is arguable that it disguised 'a coercive intent' by serving to encourage Aborigines to 'restrain their wandering habits', abandon nomadism and adopt the practices of settled modernisation.²⁵ While they were 'free' to leave the mission, indeed encouraged at Ernabella to hunt and forage for food, the mission was a haven in a still hostile colonial universe. It may be preferable to say with Rowse that rationing 'purchased' acquiescence to a new social order.²⁶

²² The primary rationale behind the money-for-dingo scalps scheme was to reduce the threat of dingoes, in particular to the large belts of SA pastoral sheep land (to the south of the Ernabella region).

²³ Rationed goods were generally food, although blankets and clothes were also distributed.

²⁴ 'Rations' in the narrow sense was provided and financed by government, in the present case, through the SA Aboriginal Protection Board: however, missions such as Ernabella and Hermannsburg supplemented these goods with additional 'rationing' from their own resources, such as mission sheep or cattle, and goods donated by metropolitan congregations.

²⁵ See for example Julie Evans, "Beyond the frontier: possibilities and precariousness along Australia's southern coast," in Russell, ed. *Colonial frontiers*: 151-172.

²⁶ Rowse, *White flour, white power*.

There were other complications. The mechanisms of the rationing regimes across Central Australia, with certain Aborigines (aged, sick, children, workers) to be fed, and others, such as able-bodied unemployed men, denied rations, were hardly arbitrary but in fact designed to reinforce the work ethic particularly important to white European Protestant missionaries. However this ethic was subverted by the Aboriginal tendency to live communally, to share goods and gifts. Also problematizing rationing at Ernabella was the competing priority of that Mission to encourage (or allow) the indigenes to retain their traditional life as far as possible, to hunt kangaroos and euros, and forage for native foodstuffs, as opposed to being 'given' rations. The missionaries expressed the problematics in varying ways, in terms of 'pauperization', an undermining of the work ethic, a disinclination to 'reward unworthy recipients', or the problem of the 'loafers' or 'parasites'.²⁷

While Albrecht, at Hermannsburg, citing Pauline injunctions about earning food through the sweat of work, was an exponent of the traditional Lutheran emphasis on the work ethic, the Ernabella missionaries such as Love, while not so strident, in general accepted the orthodox Protestant, European discourse on rations, feeding and work; in short, feeding had to be earned or deserved. There were, however, exceptions, and these were crucial. The Central Australian missionaries were not in the business of letting people die, even those whom they saw as lazy and undeserving. In a letter to Matthews at the Board of Missions in February 1945, JRB Love indicated the line he would draw between not feeding Albrecht's 'loafers' and allowing people to die from hunger. Reporting that a serious drought was persisting, he was adamant that 'we are not going to feed idlers, before it is necessary; but *you may be assured that we will not let people starve here, if the native food supply should fail.*'²⁸

²⁷ The Lutheran FW Albrecht at Hermannsburg was much more inclined to use these phrases than Love or the other missionaries at Ernabella. Yet interestingly Albrecht is the only Central Australian missionary (as far as I have read) to make, even if fleetingly, the affinity between the indigenous culture and habit of collective sharing and Christian notions of giving to those in need. The internal and intrinsic contradictions between contemporaneously inculcating a individualistic capitalist work ethic and persuading the adoption of Christian beliefs and values are not commented on by the Central Australian missionaries!

²⁸ Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1945": Love to Matthews, 2 Feb 1945 (my italics).

contaminating cash

Love's entries in the Ernabella Superintendent's Logbook and his communications with the APB give an insight into the complexities of feeding for a missionary caught in the web of conflicting discourses. Complicating matters was the conviction of the missionaries that too much money in the hands of the natives was dangerous. Cash was contaminating. Too much food was also contaminating: it sapped the desire to gather and hunt. Love found that he had to walk a fine line between supplying sufficient food to prevent starvation and having insufficient supplies so as to 'persuade' the people to 'go bush'.

Some days presented no shadows. Christmas Day 1942 saw a total of '91 men, 126 women, 92 children and 30 infants: total 339 present.' All were given 'soap and lollies' as well as gifts such as belts, mirrors, combs. The day ended with an evening meal of damper, jam and tea: 'A happy and successful day'.²⁹ Other days were more difficult:

March 28 [1943]. Sun. Accumulation of sugar [but] we have barely enough flour in store to feed shepherds for two weeks, so shall use [meat?] and split peas for school children and necessary workers till we get flour. Stealing milk from goats while out grazing has been rife lately. Today, Mr. Ward saw a number of elder girls, with [ram?] shepherd, goat shepherd and children, taking milk. I dismissed the pair of goat shepherds, the ram shepherd, and sent off the others without any [tea?] Much shouting and what sounds like abuse going on now. Having no flour to give, gave tea to all present after evening service. Have plenty of sugar, a limited amount of tea, jam is 'frozen' according to Mr. Wilkinson, so we must go carefully.³⁰

When dingo scalps were in abundance, considerable pressure was placed on food supplies: 'August 29 [1943]...63 dingo pup scalps taken yesterday in store and a large quantity of flour, sugar, tea and jam issued...Could not take all scalps, as I could not pay enough for all. Nobody at church this morning except workers: all too full of damper and jam. This huge issue of food is not a good method. Shall have to try something better.'³¹ Again, in September:

²⁹ Love, "Logbook": 25 Dec 1942.

³⁰ Ibid., 28 Mar 1943. Wartime exigencies created considerable problems of supply for the Central Australian missionaries, as, of course, did their remote locations.

³¹ Ibid., 29 Aug 1943.

Large number of scalps in yesterday. I could only take 16, for which issued 3 sacks of flour, ½ bag sugar, 11b tea, about 20 tins jam. The rest were told to hold their scalps; that an approximately equal amount of stores would be issued weekly till shearing cut out, then truck would go to Finke for more stores. Many were unwilling to disperse, but finally went off.³²

In October, 1943, in the middle of another influenza epidemic, Love noted briefly in the Logbook what was to become a significant event in his administration:

‘October 4. Mon. At 11.30pm last night mail arrived with Mesdames Cooke and Johnson (sic), representing Aborigines Protection Board, to visit Ernabella. Going around camp to sick today. The two ladies came, to see people and treatment. Old [T.?] died at noon, buried in afternoon.’³³ Love was to hear of the ‘Mesdames’ again.

Communications flowed regularly between Love and Penhall of the APB regarding matters of rations, often regarding supply problems or changes in quantity or quality of food.³⁴ At one point, for example, Love advised the APB that the mission had a surplus of tea and perhaps the value of tea not needed could be replaced with jam as the ‘aged folks like it’. Penhall was ‘pleased’ to provide jam as an additional ration for the old people.³⁵ Later, Love noted to Penhall that the native wild tobacco was scarce: ‘Could the Board secure the release of 5lbs per month to Wilkinson, Oodnadatta?’³⁶ Seven lbs of tobacco were eventually forwarded to Ernabella: ‘two sticks per week for each native who smokes.’³⁷

helping the people until the rains come

When the long drought of 1944 persisted into the next year, and traditional food was in short supply for the people, Love had to abandon, temporarily, notions of deserving and undeserving Aborigines. As he noted:

³² Ibid., 12 Sep 1943.

³³ Ibid., 4 Oct 1943.

³⁴ The APB supplied rations to mission stations as well as government settlements and isolated cattle stations throughout South Australia. The mission (in Ernabella’s case) provided considerable supplements to the government ration foods, including vegetables grown in the garden as well as the meat of goats and sheep: see also above, note 25.

³⁵ SA State Records, “GRG 52/1”: No 16 of 1943, Love to Penhall, 23 Oct 1943.

³⁶ Ibid., No 24 of 1944, Love to Penhall, 30 Sep 1944.

³⁷ Ibid., Penhall to Love, 10 Oct 1943.

For the past week I have been issuing one meal per day to all people in camp, to supplement their hunting. There is no grass seed, no fruit, most of the kangaroos are in poor condition, so native foods are now inadequate. I have asked the APB to sanction this feeding of all natives till rains make native foods plentiful again.³⁸

The situation had in fact become quite serious by early February 1945 when Love telegraphed Penhall: 'Drought serious please forward extra tea sugar jam would appreciate preserved milk regards Love.'³⁹ Penhall responded promptly. Soon after, Love followed up the telegram by writing at length to Penhall about the drought, pointing out that Ernabella had had only two inches of rain in 1944. Initially, Love pointed out, this had had the paradoxical effect of improving the food supply as 'the kangaroos had flocked in' and 'the natives were living really well on meat'. Thus the Ernabella policy of paying full value for dingo scalps had proved 'a great help in scarcity as people come in with scalps and were able to buy flour, tea, sugar and jam to supplement kangaroo meat.' This, said Love, 'preserved their independence'. However, now there were none of the grass seeds, wild fig, or small roots and fruit that normally provided a balance to the indigenous meat diet. Dingoes also were scarce 'and so the value of the scalps was not enough to properly feed all the people.' Love wrote to the APB:

So I have commenced to issue a free evening meal, of damper, jam, tea, sugar and some powdered milk, to all hands at Ernabella. This is not intended to encourage idleness. Such work as I can think of I ask from the able-bodied people, but I cannot give full work all the time to a hundred people. I am not giving meat to all hands, only to workers and school children and the usual pensioners. The issue of damper is intended to supplement, not to displace, the natives' hunting. I would be very grateful if you can bring this statement before the APB and ask approval to our helping people until the rains come and until, after the rains come, there is more native food in the bush.⁴⁰

Penhall arranged for extra stores, and assured the missionary that 'there is no doubt that the State has a duty to provide for tribal natives who are in need of

³⁸ Love, "Logbook": 1 Mar 1945.

³⁹ SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 11 of 1945, telegram Love to Penhall, sent 1 Feb 1945.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Love to Penhall, 9 Feb 1945.

food because of the prevailing drought.”⁴¹ Love is most careful to avoid the terrible Protestant charge of ‘encouraging idleness’. He was, however, unable to evade charges of ‘underfeeding’ and ‘underpaying’ Aborigines on the Mission. These originated with the reports of the ‘Mesdames’ of the APB who had visited Ernabella in October 1943. These reports were damaging to Love’s reputation, especially among the members of the Adelaide Committee under Duguid. This Committee became increasingly interventionist in the affairs of the mission and thus more and more an irritant to Love.

scarce rations

The reports of Johnston and Ternent Cooke throw a fascinating, external light on feeding and healing regimes, and on the wider mission life, at Ernabella. After noting that the two women had arrived at Ernabella during ‘an epidemic of pneumonic influenza’, Johnston described how ‘Mr. Love visited the camp twice, sometimes three times, each day, taking hot cocoa and milk; and other nourishing foods were also carried to the sick. The work became so strenuous that Mr. Love arranged for some of the sick to be brought nearer his home so he that he could attend to them during the night.’⁴² Conditions in the ‘hospital’ were primitive, Johnston noted; beds were needed (bags filled with spinifex were being used), as well as a cupboard for drugs, and chairs for the dispensary.

Each day began with breakfast at 7.30am. All the natives assembled outside the garden gate soon after. Then followed a short service conducted by Mr. Love, some of the natives taking part in the Lord’s Prayer. Then they proceeded to the ration depot where they received breakfast consisting of porridge and damper, served in their own containers, and taken to the camp. Lunch consisted of damper, tea, and sugar; for tea, damper and soup (made from goat and from vegetable from the garden, and supplemented with split peas or rice substitute). Dampers are made near the depot each day by 3 or 4 lubras. These rations are supplied to the pensioners (old people), the sick, working natives, and the children...On Friday afternoons natives begin to come in from the bush, bringing dog scalps with them. These are received on Saturday mornings, when they are bartered for goods [which] include flour, tea, sugar, and jam (tobacco, when available). We also noticed that

⁴¹ Ibid., Penhall to Love, 1 Mar 1945. This action was approved by the full Board on 7 Mar 1945 (the retrospective nature of this approval indicating, incidentally, the autonomy and authority exercised by Penhall as the Board’s Secretary).

⁴² Ibid., No 90 of 1943, Report by AM Johnston on a Visit to Ernabella, 28 Oct 1943.

at the same time women received one dress length and two tins of jam.⁴³ Ternent Cooke described how rations were distributed: 'the old and infirm, or "pensioners" as they are called at Ernabella...receive one meal only, at night. This consists of a hunk of damper and tea with sugar.'⁴⁴ Rations had been reduced due to the war and to Ternent Cooke the old women looked 'undernourished'; she thought that 'possibly their share of food from the hunt was small.' She recommended that the Board should give 'further consideration' to the 'native pensioners ration.' She also noted that only a limited number of scalps were able to be exchanged at the Mission as the store was low on goods:

We watched from inside the store, and saw that the natives became angry when Mr. Love said he could take no further scalps. He had to start to close the door and speak to them firmly. Mr. Love told us that he does not think the natives are treacherous, but they are quick-tempered.⁴⁵

While Ternent Cook conceded the difficulties of an isolated mission station, she wrote: 'it seems a pity that the store does not contain enough to supply the aborigines with a few of the ordinary amenities of life, especially as some work and others have the means to barter.' She was also concerned at the effect of the cold climate on the people: 'It distressed me to see the sick people lying naked on the ground with, perhaps, only an old bag to lie on. There seemed to be few blankets, though Mr. Love said that nearly every native had had one.' Ternent Cook also queried the staffing levels of the Mission and the amount of remuneration for Aboriginal workers, suggesting both should be 'revised'. She concluded, however:

I was impressed by the amount of manual work that is of necessity done by the missionaries, by their fortitude, long hours, self-sacrifice, and by the difficulties of the work of the Mission.⁴⁶

good feeding is the first bulwark against disease

The Board of Mission was concerned about the two APB reports, along with Duguid in Adelaide who perhaps naturally regarded any criticism of Ernabella,

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Report by Mrs. Ternent Cooke, n.d.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

even mild, with alarm. Matthews wrote urgently to Love regarding the apparent unavailability of rations at the Ernabella store:

The Board is very concerned that we are not keeping faith with the SA Government who asked us if we were willing to be a depot. We agreed. And the natives may become discontented and go elsewhere. The Board wants you to have at Ernabella at least three months supplies. If the store does not have capacity, enlarge the capacity of the store so as to have sufficient for all emergencies.⁴⁷

The unusually peremptory tone of this letter was evidence of the Board's concern. Duguid, too, seemed to be losing confidence in the man whom three years previously he had described to Chinnery in glowing terms. As Duguid was still on the APB, he was irked and possibly embarrassed by the criticisms, however limited and indirect, of the administration of Ernabella. Suddenly, to Duguid, the exemplary missionary became a man who gave orders without any practical knowledge, and failed to cooperate with his staff, or with experts.⁴⁸ Duguid went even further than these criticisms, cutting loose with savage and unsubstantiated allegations against Love's record at Kunmunya, with the unfair implication that he had allowed Aborigines to die:

Love's failure to save the natives from preventable illness and death at Kunmunya is common knowledge in circles in Adelaide....the interest of the Aborigines is why we are at Ernabella. Love says the appalling death rate at Kunmunya was due to leprosy and yaws but people have no right to die from either if they are well fed.....good feeding is the first bulwark against [disease].⁴⁹

The failure to supply scalps, Duguid charged, was 'primarily' because 'the old custom' of keeping three months supply of food in the store had been deemed unwise by Love. Duguid claimed that Hermannsburg kept six months food in reserve although it was closer to the railhead than Ernabella. He was also concerned, as was the Board, with the suggestions made in Ternent Cooke's report regarding underpayment of natives employed at Ernabella. He

⁴⁷ Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1943": Matthews to Love, 10 Dec 1943.

⁴⁸ Duguid, "Series 1: general correspondence": Duguid to Matthews (copy), 7 May 1944. Elkin may have triggered this last grievance with his assessment that Love had never enjoyed the scrutiny of anthropologists on his missionary turf: see *ibid.*, Elkin to Duguid, 27 Dec 1940.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Duguid to Matthews (copy), 7 May 1944.

remembered an incident where another missionary at Ernabella had become 'disturbed when Love would not allow him to give a 'reward' to a native for specially good or very arduous work.' Duguid argued that 'not to recognize good work because the doer is an Aborigine is wrong.' He concluded:

The interest of the Aborigines is why we are at Ernabella. The Board [of Missions] must direct that the Aborigines be properly fed and rewarded. Love will find it hard to have his work inspected and discussed. He was so long on his own at Kunmunya without oversight. But it must be done. He will have to submit to it.⁵⁰

Duguid had ignored the fact that Love had a logical reason for his reluctance to stock the store for a lengthy period of time, the danger of weevils. It should also be noted that due to the primitive state of communications and transport operating at that time in Central Australia, and the distant but constant presence of the war, there were genuine logistical difficulties in maintaining a constant supply of rations and food. As we have seen in Love's reports, when the pup scalps were plentiful, the pressure on the store was immense.

cash is not a necessity

Love took the implied criticism from the Board calmly at first, noting that problems with the reliability and size of the mission truck, and the size of the store, had contributed to the rations crisis. He began negotiations with the APB for a financial contribution to build a larger store and requested a new, larger truck from the Board of Missions.⁵¹ He agreed to provide 'pensioners' with two meals a day. But Love's strategy in both matters of feeding and payment was to provide a disincentive to the mission Aborigine to remain on the mission and be fed through the rationing regime. Love was insistent that the indigenous hunter-gatherer economy was retained as far as possible, thus reducing the imperatives and costs (he was a frugal Presbyterian at heart) of rationing to the minimum. He argued to Matthews that, while he had agreed 'in principle' with the APB to

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Penhall for his part quickly began the process of filling the lacunae in materials at Ernabella that the Ternent Cooke and Johnston reports had identified: see SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 90 of 1943, Penhall to Board, 17 Nov 1943. He also wrote to Chinnery in Canberra (the Commonwealth Advisor on Native Affairs) regarding the APB's 'consideration of adequate diet for detribalised and semi-detribalised aborigines in the Ernabella district': *ibid.*, Penhall to Chinnery, 16 Feb 1944.

pay cash wages to natives employed by the Mission, 'cash is not a necessity' to the aborigines at Ernabella: 'too much cash only means idle men and women living on the workers.' Not all the Ernabella missionaries agreed:

Mr. Brown does not think we give our workers enough. The rest of us (with long experience) think lavish giving of money may most likely do more harm than good...I propose to give every worker, in addition to the food and clothes they get now 1/- each Sat morn to spend on sugar, lollies etc...then on special work, for example shearing, to be paid in accordance with their skill; up to the white man's pay if they can reach the white man's standard.⁵²

Tim Rowse in his book on rationing describes the transformation of the rationing relationship during the assimilation era and sees the essence of the change over time as cash substituting for rations.⁵³ The experience of Ernabella and Love is indicative of the deep unease felt by some missionaries at this process. Love did concede that the payment of wages for labour would increase gradually [but] 'presently, the allowance of £600 p.a. [from the Board] seems ample.' He also asserted that to hold extra rations on hand in the store risked getting flour infested by weevils. He made the point that 'Cooke and Johnston did not appreciate the fact that...the natives do not live on proceeds of scalps.'⁵⁴ The exemplary missionary, expert in Aboriginal custom, added a tart addendum:

Regarding my former practice to issue pensioners with one meal per day:

⁵² Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1944": Love to Matthews, 4 Jul 1944.

⁵³ Rowse, *White flour, white power*.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Love to Matthews, 4 Jul 1944. After discussions with the APB and the pressures Love was feeling from missionary circles in the South, Love eventually agreed in June 1944 that a larger store to carry up to three months of rations was advisable, and the SA Parliament in December of that year voted £200 towards the cost of the work: see SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 58 of 1944, Love to Penhall, 14 Jun 1944; Penhall to Love, 5 Dec 1944. In his stubborn fashion, however, Love continued to argue against the enlargement of the ration store. In January of 1945, he put a lengthy case to the APB for an alternative means of spending the money: the construction of a 'community shelter' which could be occupied 'by large numbers on stormy nights' and which could be used for 'community gatherings for recreation or uplift, either for their own corroboree singing or for talks by white friends'. Love had genuinely been concerned for some time about what he saw as the denuding and deforestation of the Ernabella environs by the natives who stripped timber for their shelters, and saw his 'community shelter' or 'Rest Home' as Penhall called it, as ameliorating this problem. Love submitted plans for the shelter and committed himself and the Mission to contribute to the labour to build it: see *ibid.*, No 11 of 1945, Love to Penhall, 3 Jan 1945. Penhall was forced to point out to Love that Parliament had voted monies for the purpose of 'a new ration store' and it was not possible to use the money for any other purpose. He added that the large amount of galvanised roofing Love had envisaged for his shelter was not available due to war conditions: *ibid.*, Penhall to Love, 16 Jan 1945. Love was finally beaten on the matter of 'a new ration store'.

At the suggestion of Mr. Penhall, I have, since my return, been giving them morning porridge as well, to meet the impression on the part of some well wishers that the old people were not getting enough. This morning was cold, with a heavy frost. No old folk turned up for breakfast. I asked where they were, and was told that they did not want to come for breakfast on this frosty morning, but would come for the evening meals! So much for one meal not being considered enough. The wild blackfellow only eats once per day.⁵⁵

The repercussions of what was now becoming known as the underfeeding (and underpaying) crisis at Ernabella continued. Matthews, writing to Duguid privately, thought he understood the complexity of the issue. The missions, he felt, ought to encourage the people to find their own food in bush. Yet he had heard from Rex Battarbee about a 'drift' of natives from Ernabella to the Ration Depot which Federal authorities had established near Alice Springs where they could apparently get food whether working or not. Missionaries and mission administrators invariably became anxious when 'drift' was mentioned: it was code for both contamination by low whites and for nomadic movement away from the mission station towards the tempting township lights.⁵⁶ Matthews was also concerned about malnutrition and felt that the APB should direct Love regarding a properly balanced diet for the Aborigines. As to underpayment, Matthews told Duguid that natives on missions should be better paid than elsewhere: 'It is our simple duty to free ourselves from any possibility of being charged with underfeeding or underpaying our workers.'⁵⁷

a belief that the Aborigines are not worth saving

In his private letter to Duguid, Matthews demonstrated a profound concern and a rare vein of analysis about the role of the churches in establishing missions to

⁵⁵Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1944": Love to Matthews, 4 Jul 1944.

⁵⁶ Duguid, "Series 1: Duguid correspondence": Matthews to Duguid, 18 May 1944: 'Yet Battarbee tells us that many natives who used to go to Ernabella now go N-E to the Depot which the Federal authorities have established near Alice Springs or Hermannsburg and get food whether working or not'. Battarbee, the artist who became Albert Namatjira's mentor, was working as an administrator at Hermannsburg during the war years. Indeed he was placed at Hermannsburg by the authorities apparently partly to keep watch on the potentially subversive activities of the dangerous German missionary FW Albrecht! The ration depot referred to was probably Areyonga which, interestingly, was the locale of a dispute that erupted in 1947 between the Ernabella and Hermannsburg administrations over the issue Matthews was concerned about in 1944, a 'drift' of Pitjantjatjara people away from Ernabella to Areyonga: see this chapter, below.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

the Aborigines. It is worth quoting extensively, if only because it articulates a discourse of 'salvation' that existed not only on the mission site but was held at a high level in the Presbyterian missionary church:

Our failure, and it is a possible failure at Ernabella, goes much deeper than underfeeding. I do not know if I can express it properly but I think underlying it is an un-uttered belief that the Aborigines are not worth saving. Or they are not capable of being used worthily in our modern life. We as Churches play at the business of saving them, and we are the only people who can save them. Our equipment of a Mission station is of the most meagre and inadequate kind. Beside a people who are community-minded, who think of work in terms of the group, we set down an individual or even two, who can give to the Aborigines the most inadequate conceptions of what the white community from where they came stands for and does...Ward [a missionary at Ernabella] says we will never make a shearer of the Aborigine, or a pastoralist, or an agriculturalist? But do we go the right way about trying? We read of examples of good shearers. But these are individuals. What of the tribe? Is the general effect of our insufficient labours on their behalf just to break the tribal life up and so disintegrate the life of the community? In the back of my mind is the uncomfortable conviction that some of those who are at work with the Aborigine do not really believe that there is any future for him.⁵⁸

It is hard, against the background of the arguments about Aborigines that Love was having around this time with Matthews and the Board, and with Duguid, regarding rations, feeding, payment of wages, and appropriate employment for adolescent aborigines, to believe that the Secretary was not referring to JRB Love in his last, rather bitter comment.⁵⁹ Love, however, did participate in a discourse of salvation. If he did not feed the indigenous body to the satisfaction of Matthews or Duguid, it was because he wanted the Aborigine to continue to feed himself as far and as long as possible; if he did not recompense the indigenous worker adequately, it was because he feared the effects of a cash economy on the indigenous moral economy. Matthews' perception may, however, have been to sense a deep pessimism that resided in Love's thinking about the indigenous future. He was uncertain as to whether the Aborigine would survive in a White Australia: they would have to 'earn their way' now, in another harsh environment, within and against the white culture. He wanted, however, to

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ For their 'discussions' on employment at the mission station for aboriginal adolescents in particular, see chapter eleven, below.

ensure that no part of any failure to survive could be held to his account. His 'future' for the Aborigine was, in the end, a radically conservative vision, to hold to the nomadic and traditional past for as long as possible, with only incremental and forced steps into a shared and unstable future with white Australians. It was here Love's discourse diverged to some extent from Albrecht's: the Hermannsburg missionary, while still a gradualist, had accepted, albeit reluctantly and with considerable reservation, that the Aborigines themselves would seek an accelerating incorporation into the white man's world.

keep feeding until the ground has been recovered

Love went on the offensive when he realized eventually that his reputation was coming under fire through 'persistent reports of underfeeding and underpaying'. He wrote to the Board, demanding to know from where the reports had emanated: 'I am astonished to hear that any such report has been made. It is not true: but I think perhaps that I should know from whom the charge has come.'⁶⁰ Matthews responded to Love's demand regarding the source of the 'underfeeding' reports: he pointed out that it had begun 'with the 2 women who visited Ernabella in 1943', and added, somewhat disingenuously, that 'I deeply regret that you should be worried by such rumours. Mr. Penhall was very emphatic that there was no truth whatsoever in them'.⁶¹ Duguid also contacted Love about the matter, on Matthew's request, confirming that the report on underfeeding had come from the APB but curtly advising Love that 'no good would come from mentioning names.' Then he gave Love a directive that must have rankled: 'The APB wants you to keep on feeding until the ground has been recovered.'⁶² This probably summed up the difference between them on this

⁶⁰ Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1945": Love to Matthews, 20 Mar 1945. It is some indication perhaps of Love's isolation, both in a geographical and psychological sense, that by 1945 he had apparently not yet completely deduced the source of these 'persistent reports', although he already knew some at least had come through the APB female members' reports.

⁶¹ Ibid., Matthews to Love, 4 Apr 1945. In fact, a deputation of the Board of Missions, which included Matthews, had flown to Adelaide in early 1945 to meet with the Adelaide Committee over concerns about Love's administration, and had also met with Penhall: see below, chapter eleven. My comment about Matthews's disingenuousness should perhaps be tempered with the possibility that Penhall had, at this meeting, fully laid to rest the residual misgivings Matthews had had regarding Love in the more immediate aftermath of the 'underfeeding crisis'.

⁶² Ibid., Duguid to Love, 8 Apr 1945.

issue: Duguid thought much ground had been lost; Love would never have conceded that any had been given away.

In the end, the Board did back their superintendent strongly and in fact reprimanded Duguid in forceful terms for his allegations of lack of care of Aborigines on Love's part, asserting there was no basis to them.⁶³ And Mathews, ever diplomatic, suggested to the superintendent in a letter that 'it is just possible that those who make comments on such matters should make them only after a prolonged stay amongst the natives'.⁶⁴ Duguid, characteristically, refused to back down and his relationship with Love began inevitably to deteriorate.

The last scrutiny

Penhall himself, with Cleland and Len Cook of the APB, visited Ernabella towards the end of 1945. Cleland and Cook wrote glowing reports of their visit. Penhall did not write a report but reported to Matthews on his visit to 'this very interesting and well conducted Mission'.⁶⁵ The reports focused on the issues of feeding and payment, as well as Love's administration, and taken together provided substantial vindication for Love. It should be remembered, however, that the APB had a vested interest in a positive narrative on Ernabella. After all, it was responsible for the broad administration of 'native affairs' throughout South Australia and it does seem that a concerted effort was made to 'rehabilitate' the mission station after the traumas generated by Ternent Cooke and Johnston. Penhall observed to Matthews that 'everyone appeared to be

⁶³ Duguid, "Series 1: Duguid correspondence": Matthews to Duguid, 8 Jun 1944. Matthews advised Duguid, in his capacity as Secretary, that the Board was 'very seriously disturbed' by his criticisms of Love. It rejected any question of disloyalty to the Board or unwillingness to carry out its directions. The Board asserted that 'Ernabella has not failed to give adequate food and payment. The Board stands by Mr Love. Except in drought, it is not the policy of the Board to feed the natives promiscuously.' The Board found that Love's failure to pay for scalps in 1943 was due to repeated breakdowns of the mail truck. He himself was not responsible. Duguid's statements on Kunmunya were based, asserted the Board, on 'insufficient knowledge'. The Board felt compelled to say that Mr. Love was not responsible for deaths at Kunmunya. The Board was satisfied that Kunmunya natives were adequately fed. None of this was meant however to detract from the Board's 'very warm appreciation of all you [Duguid] have done since the inception of the Mission'.

⁶⁴ Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1944": Matthews to Love, 31 Jul 1944.

⁶⁵ SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 11 (A) of 1945, Penhall to Matthews, 8 Mar 1946.

provided with ample food'. He said the food at Ernabella consisted of stew composed of meat, either sheep or goat, with 3 or 4 kinds of vegetables. The baker's oven constructed by Trudinger was producing good bread, with aborigines assisting with the mixing, kneading, and baking. Native game and fruits abounded. Cleland thought 'the system of feeding is wise'. He found the stew thick and appetizing, although he thought the diet 'lacked meat'. This deficiency was compensated, he noted, by 'what the hunters and gatherers bring in from the bush'. Cleland stated that 'the saving of infant lives by the care bestowed by the Mission must be considerable'. The payment of one shilling a week to workers was deemed adequate at such a remote location. Cleland considered that the 500 or so 'floating population' of indigenes that visited the mission annually served an important function in the white economy by 'controlling' the dingo problem. His overall assessment was that 'we are fully convinced that Mr Love's administration is a wise one, and a very successful one. If his successors are able to control the situation as he has controlled it, there is a prospect of a happy pure-blood native population being resident here for many years to come.'⁶⁶ To Cleland, as interested and sympathetic as he was to Aboriginal people, it was still a matter of 'controlling' a primitive tribe, albeit of 'happy pure-bloods'.

the work has to be done

The whole 'underfeeding' affair had a couple of interesting postscripts. The APB became interested in the question of adequate diets for the Aborigines under its control and attempted to get expert advice on the adequacy of diets for remote Aborigines.⁶⁷ It also put in place a survey of all missions and settlements under

⁶⁶ Ibid., Cleland: Report on a visit to Ernabella in the Far North and North West of South Australia.

⁶⁷ See Ibid., No 68/1945, Sec, APB Subject: Nutrition of Natives in South Australia. The whole matter of the *adequacy* of the diet provided for indigenous people by the colonial enterprise is an interesting question and one that I have not been able to pursue in this study at any length. From the perspective of the 21st C, it seems an early and sustained confluence of the desire of Aborigines for, and the willingness of colonial agents, including missionaries, to provide, articles such as flour, tea, sugar, jam and tobacco as staple items, cannot have provided, on their own, a satisfactory diet. The Ernabella missionaries would have replied that the mission's feeding regime was meant only to supplement the good protein and good exercise regime of the still hunting-gathering Pitjantjatjara. Note that the APB had a list of a nutritional scale drawn up at Adelaide University (and submitted by Professor JB Cleland, the Chairman of the APB) of what a person on rations should receive *per day*: 1 pint milk, 1 oz. butter, 1oz. cheese or an egg, 1 serve meat, 1 serve potato, 1 citrus fruit or large tomato, 2 serves vegetables, 3 serves cereal. It is instructive to note how this scale varies from the earlier 'ration menu' that Penhall had advised Love was the standard at the outset of his administration in

its jurisdiction regarding the issue of feeding.⁶⁸ Another sequel was a dispute that developed in the late 1940s between Ernabella and Hermannsburg, and between the Presbyterian and Lutheran Boards of Mission, over exactly these issues of rationing and feeding. We have already seen that the Presbyterian Board was aware of talk of a drift of 'their' natives at Ernabella to a depot near Alice Springs, Areyonga, which was administered by the Lutherans through Hermannsburg and the Finke River Mission (FRM). Albrecht and the FRM had established Areyonga in the early forties as 'a haven of refuge' for what Albrecht characterised as 'remnants of the Pitjantjara people' who had left their own country. Albrecht had convinced Chinnery, the Commonwealth Advisor on Native Affairs, to assist his mission in 'saving' Pitjantjatjara caught between the Musgraves and Petermanns, and Alice Springs. Albrecht explained the rationale to the Chairman of his Board:

I caught Chinnery before he returned South and he almost immediately agreed to finance a store as at Haast Bluff and start a Ration Depot with a Native in charge. Mr Chinnery said, and we know it only too well, that if we didn't step in, nobody else will and these people will lose the last little vitality they show as a tribe...none here want to load more work on our shoulders, but to leave this alone was impossible; the work has to be done.⁶⁹

But controversy arose in 1947 when the new Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Missions, VC Coombes, succeeding Matthews, wrote to the Chairman of the FRM, Reidel, putting the Ernabella concerns in somewhat inflammatory terms:

1941: see above, chapter 8, where the adult standard *weekly* ration consisted of 7lbs flour, 2lbs sugar, 4ozs tea, 1lb rice, and 2 sticks of tobacco! Also: there was an interesting exchange between Elkin and Duguid (still a member of the APB) in 1944. Elkin wrote to Duguid regarding a pamphlet the Adelaide doctor had written on the future of the Aborigines, where he had pressed for the need for adequate food and nutrition for natives, to 'build up against diseases'. Elkin was especially concerned that Duguid had predicted that after the war, there would be 'greater intermingling of whites and Aborigines'. He asked Duguid what grounds there were for this assumption, and did Duguid believe there would be 'greater white exploitation after the War': Duguid, "Series 1: Duguid correspondence": Elkin to Duguid, 17 Apr 1944. Duguid replied that after the opening up of the Interior by the military, it was inevitable that this would happen and he added that 'the interests of settlers will always be regarded higher than Aborigines by the Government': *ibid.*, Duguid to Elkin (copy), 1 May 1944.

⁶⁸ The institutions were surveyed on the number of Aborigines receiving food from APB, how many entirely dependent on APB (breaking this into aged/infirm, unemployed men, women dependents, children under 12yrs old). Also, the survey sought information on varieties of food, quantities of food, numbers of meals, the provision of stew or soup, and if so, the proportion and nature of solid food to each gallon of water: see SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 68 of 1945.

⁶⁹ F.W. Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection": Albrecht to Reidel, 20 Aug 1943.

Ernabella natives were being 'enticed' to Areyonga by 'artificial inducements' and by the 'largesse' of the whites there, there was an 'abnormal admixture' of tribes there, and that Ernabella natives were badly influenced by a certain 'immorality and lawlessness' at Areyonga.⁷⁰ The Lutherans strongly refuted all the charges separately and with such finality that the matter was never raised again.⁷¹

Reidel was clearly bemused by the accusation of 'largesse' on the part of the whites. He pointed out that it was the Government, not the mission, which provided the rations and decided who would be the recipients, and added dryly: 'It would be quite a new charge levelled against the Government, according to our experience, that they are dealing out largesse to natives.'⁷²

the Aborigine has seen and tasted something new and preferable

Albrecht also entered the debate, pointing out that the policies of Ernabella and Hermannsburg in relation to rationing did not differ much. Yet he recognized, as he had five years earlier in that 'gestural moment' when he had briefly met Love, that Ernabella was faced with additional dilemmas because of the priority it had put on retaining the traditional life of the Aborigine. Albrecht argued that if Ernabella was 'losing its attraction' for the native, it was not because Areyonga was offering artificial inducements, which in any case the Lutherans denied, but because Aborigines were aware of and interested in what was happening all around them, on cattle stations, and other settled areas:

Are not the white staff of Ernabella living a normal life, and while doing so, are closely watched by the Pitjantjatjara people whose appetite and curiosity to try everything themselves is by now well [aroused?]? And is not Ernabella feeding workers and schoolchildren who automatically develop a desire for still more and better things? [Are] not some clothing and blankets issued to Aborigines at Ernabella? If so, then it is just impossible to let a person move about in garments today, and then expect him, or even somebody with him, to go about naked tomorrow. It does not work if he is fed on flour, tea, or sugar today, and then expected to relish a grass seed damper tomorrow...⁷³

He felt that while it was 'a grave mistake' to try to hasten the development of the

⁷⁰ Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 6/1946-51": Coombes to Reidel, 26 Nov 1947.

⁷¹ Ibid., Reidel to Coombes, 5 Dec 1947.

⁷² Ibid., Reidel to Coombes, 5 Dec 1947.

⁷³ Ibid., Albrecht to Reidel (copy), 14 Jan 1948.

Aborigine in any way, it was also 'fatal' to any work among them 'if the people are misunderstood in their desires, or even attempts made to retard development.' He advised Ernabella 'to re-examine its policy to see whether the reasonable demands of the people have been met.' Albrecht sympathized with Ernabella's predicament: 'Ernabella is only beginning to experience for the first time in measure what has been a tremendous problem to us for many years past because of the proximity of the Railhead.' While he noted that Ernabella 'prides itself with the idea of keeping the Native in his natural state' he argued that 'just that attempt today is the Natives' biggest grievance. He has no desire to stay as he is after he has seen and tasted something new, which, in his opinion, is preferable to what he has had so far.' Albrecht concluded in a spirit of magnanimity and cooperation:

In spite of what has been said, Hermannsburg and Ernabella are not divided and will continue to cooperate in the best interests of the people whom we are committed to serve...[W]e have no intention of belittling in any way their magnificent effort, nor cast a slur on their work.⁷⁴

Hermannsburg and Ernabella, it is true, shared similar broad goals, of keeping their indigenous people separated from harmful influences, teaching Christian belief, avoiding 'pauperisation', and inculcating a work ethic, although there were significant differences of emphasis. Yet the principal problematic that Ernabella faced in relation to feeding and rationing was, as Albrecht saw, the tension between colonial techniques that were designed to draw indigenous people into the white capitalist economy and its attendant values and work ethics and a missionary philosophy that was determined to separate and insulate them from that economy and values and privilege the traditional hunter-gatherer economy and culture. It was a tension that perhaps JRB Love, and Ernabella Mission, faced in a purer form than almost anywhere else in Australia because of the unusual preference the Mission site gave to 'saving' the traditional forms of society and economy for the indigenous body. But, in the end, it was a tension they found difficult to resolve.

⁷⁴ Ibid.