

Archive Box

Tony Birch

Series One: Matters in relation to Aborigines Act (1886)

(1.1)

24 May 1930

The Board for the Protection of the Aborigines reports that for the month ending April 1930 no additional expenditure was outlaid by the Board with the exception of the purchase of 100 yards of superior fencing wire. The ration inventory for the natives and half castes recognised within the relevant clauses of the Act (1886) did not exceed previously stated amounts allocated and attended to within that Act (1886).

The Board additionally reports ration sundries as a result of the following deaths:

Doreen M – Pneumonia and Toxaemia

Baby Charles – [ditto]

Rebecca H infant half-caste – [ditto]

M newborn – stillborn

J newborn – [ditto]

In closing let it be noted again by the Board in its report to the Chief Secretary of the state of Victoria that the said fencing wire was of superior quality.

Yours

In service of His Majesty

(1.2)

12 June 1930

... it is additionally the duty of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines to bring to the attention of the Chief Secretary the fact that the said family discussed above in this item (1.2) although being previously classified as quadroons under the Act (1886) are not natives as such. Although it is clear that they are also not octroon, being therefore (near) pure white within the Act (1886) it is clear that they not be eligible for assistance under the Act (1886) and should therefore be banished from all stations and reserves categorised as such under the Act (1886).

It is noted by the Board and here brought to the attention of the Chief Secretary that the children are lightly coloured, almost white, (as white as white can be) under the Act (1886). In due light of the children being so white it is the duty of the Board to advise the Chief Secretary that the said children should be removed immediately from the evil atmosphere of any fringe camp to which they may be taken to by their mixed blood parents. It is the Board's view that these (near) white as white can be children be placed in the care and protection of the Board at one of its numerous benevolent facilities so that the fullness of their lightness and whiteness as defined within the Act (1886) be enjoyed as to bring about an outcome where the dark stain of the native be removed for all time from this state.

It is also the duty of the Board to report that an infant was born a week gone less one day in the past week to the half caste Betsy Angwin. The skin of the infant was as white as that of any child of the Empire, particularly those of Britain who it is said do not see a shining sun. The Board advises that it be in the interest of the child that it be removed from its mother forthwith so not as either to taint the infant with the habits of the native nor allow the rays of sunlight to darken the hue of the infant's skin (as we know to be a scientific reality). The child would be benevolently received at our recently erected institution that has been purposefully designed with such a purpose in mind to ensure that the rays of the sun be kept from all buildings of the institution so as to ensure that the half caste, quarter caste and octroon infants of light

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skin received there (within) grow to enjoy the fruits of their whiteness as defined within the Act (1886) and in particular Clause II sec. iv. *Enjoyment of the fruits of whiteness.*

Yours

In service of His Majesty

(1.3)

2 August 1931

It is the duty of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines to report with most urgency a concerning and growing level of agitation that is occurring amongst the half castes and other mixed bloods residing in and surrounding the reserve. One half caste has written in complaint that she wishes that her adult son, a quadroon, reside with her, claiming that there is a love between them. No such clause, pertaining to the emotions of the native or mixed blood exists within the Act (1886). We therefore responded in the negative to the request. But the woman persisted with her complaint, much to the shock of my fellow officers and myself.

I have since visited the reserve and interviewed the woman. I was surprised as to the darkness of her pigmentation. In fact I suspect that she may in fact be a full blood native (within etc.). If such were the case she would be of some interests to the science fraternity I have no doubt. While at her humble but tidy abode she showed me a photograph of her son in a uniform of the Great War. He is fair-haired, fair skinned and I would suspect even blue-eyed. He may be either a quadroon or an 'Oddity' (Clause V sec iii of the Act (1886)). Whatever his classification be, I informed the woman that her son would not be granted permission to reside with her at the reserve. She was somewhat distressed by this and although I cannot be certain she appeared to shed a tear. As my duty demands within the Act (1886) I consoled the woman with a kind word and hand on her shoulder. This appeared to calm and pacify her. She subsequently offered me a cup of tea. Quite naturally, I declined. We do not expect to hear further complaint from the woman.

I took it upon myself to subsequently contact a Lodge associate of mine, who is at present the senior Professor of Anatomy at the University. He was most interested in my description of the woman. He seeks only a photograph of her at present and whatever genealogical details that we have retained on record. I seek orders from the Chief Secretary for permission to release such details.

He further commented in conversation that it was remarkable that within the modern world of which this state is a part that a full blood native continues to exist. He was tremendously excited at the prospect of examining the woman. I would suggest that we remove the woman from the reserve and transport her to Melbourne. If on examination it is discovered that the woman is in fact a half caste we will at least be satisfied that we have separated her from her son.

Yours

In service of His Majesty

(1.4)

30 October 1930

It is the duty of the Board to report that we have had a request from the Metropolitan Benevolent Society (MBS) that its members be allowed to visit the reserve during the forthcoming summer season. Although we have had problems in the past with some visitors to the reserve poking and prodding the natives without due requisitions being sought and granted (within etc.) we feel that it would do the natives no harm to move amongst the white community for brief social intercourse. It may be possible they can earn some pocket money by having their portraits taken. The Board would only take a percentage of the amount with the resident retaining the remainder from which they may purchase tobacco etc.

Members of the MBS are both upstanding members of our community and fine biological specimens, if their craniological disposition be any guide. Your advice on these matters is sought.

Yours

In service of His Majesty

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(1.5)

6 December 1930

It is the duty of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines to report that in view of the recent Ordinance 6 legislation that has found passage through both houses of His Majesty's parliament that the re-classification of the residents of the reserve has resulted in the following outcome:

32 previous natives [full-blood] now half caste, with the exception of 6 who have been classified as quadroon with a further 3 residents having at this moment an undetermined status.

We seek further examination of these residents. Therefore the Board will require a travel pass for each of the 3 persons so that they may be transported to Melbourne. We also seek an allowance for each of the 3 persons for meals and accommodation; the amount not to exceed 10 shillings for each of the 3 persons.

We urgently seek advice from the Chief Secretary as to what is to be done with the 3 persons in the event that the learned University men determine any of the 3 persons to be octroon — therefore in fact — white. If such were to be the case it may be illegal for an officer of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines to be seen to have any authority over the 3 said persons if it were determined that the 3 persons were in fact white and thus be able to avail themselves to the freedoms enjoyed and expressed by all white citizens of this nation. I suggest that it would be of some embarrassment for members of the Board for the Protection of the Aborigines to be overseeing or controlling in any manner the free movement of any member of the community who is in fact not an Aborigine under the Act (1886).

Further to this at present all residents of the reserve are required to don a regulation uniform that is both functional and quite comfortable (although I have certainly never worn one of the uniforms myself — nor any of my officers). If the 3 men were to be re-classified as (near) pure white men (within the Act (1886)) when in Melbourne we would

not have any suitable attire for them. As you would recognise it would be inappropriate for 3 (near) pure white men to be seen in native reserve dress, particularly within the hallowed grounds of our seat of learning.

I have taken the liberty to contact one of the more reputable Men's Wear stores within the central business district of Melbourne. The proprietor of the store attended the same public school as I myself did (and I believe you also, Sir?). Discretion is assured therefore. We have hatched a plan, so to speak, whereby being in point of fact as pertaining to Clause IIV sec. ii of the so said Act (1886) that if the 3 current native persons are re-classified as 3 (near) pure white persons one of the staff of the said therefore within above Men's Wear store will hasten (quickly) to the Medical Department with the said above attire, whereby if it such will be deemed to be the case the 3 (near) pure white persons will not only gain their freedom as citizens of the Empire (not only within the Act (1886) but the Constitution (1901) also) they will be suitably dressed for the occasion. I seek advice from your office on all above and within matters.

Yours

In service of His Majesty