CHAPTER III

'PRENTICED OUT FOR SIXPENCE A WEEK

The impact on Aboriginal communities of Protection Board policy was in general sharpened or deflected by their regional context but there was one set of experiences which were shared across at least the eastern half of the State. These were the experiences of the families whose children were taken and those of the children themselves, isolated from their communities and fed into either the Protection Board or the Children's Relief (later Child Welfare) "disposal" systems, to be eventually "apprenticed out".

There are now three published accounts by Aboriginal people recording their experiences as "Wards". Those of Jimmy Barker, "apprenticed" from Brewarrina in 1915, and of Margaret Tucker, taken from Moonacullah in 1917, describe with chilling clarity their memories of the Protection Board system.¹ That of Monica Clare records an only marginally happier existence as a Ward of the Child Welfare Department, after being taken from the northern slopes area in 1931.²

These accounts are in complete accord with the memories of the 19 people interviewed for this study who had been "apprenticed" as Wards of the Board.³ While two or three of these people had enjoyed

2 Clare, Monica: Karobran, pp29-58.
3 Dora Sullivan (nee Hill), Interviews T4, T11, T22; removed from Angledool. Margaret Parker (nee McHughes), Interviews T4, T7, T19; removed from Brewarrina. Evelyn Hardy (nee Whitton), Interview T4; removed from Wellington. Nick Collis, Interview C12; removed from Brewarrina. May Cubby (nee Richardson), Interview T15; removed from Denawan. Billy Moore, Interview T17; removed from Bomaderry. Donis Barker (nee Hardy), Interview T18; removed from Brewarrina. Hazel Clark (nee Howell), Interview T25; removed from Brewarrina. Violet Wilson (nee Devine), Interview T26; removed from Brewarrina. Isadore Phillips (nee Solomon), Interview C29; removed from Cumeragunja. Agnes Murray (nee Dixon), Interview C32; removed from Brewarrina. George Rose, Interview C34; removed from Angledool. Essena Sullivan (nee Whitford), Interview T36; removed from Walgett.
comfortable or even educational periods for part or all of their "apprenticeship", they were well aware that these conditions had been entirely dependent on the good will of their employer and that most others had not shared these benefits. Instead, it is apparent that the frustrations of hard menial labour and the physical abuse of the employer's discipline, which drove Jimmie Barker to try to escape, and the emotional trauma of isolation and powerlessness, which drove Margaret Tucker to a suicide attempt and Monica Clare to introversion and depression, were not unusual experiences but were in fact the normal experience for young Aboriginal "apprentices".

The scars left on individuals and families by the "apprenticeship" system have been clearly exposed by Jimmie Barker, Margaret Tucker and Monica Clare, and this chapter will not attempt to add further individual accounts, expanding on those published only on issues untouched by them. Here the more general patterns of experience and impact will be traced, as revealed by both Aboriginal memories and by the Board's records. The latter dealt only with those children made wards of the Board and not with those, like Monica Clare, who were handed over to Child Welfare because they were classed as "quadroons" or "octroons".

Although it has been only in the mid-1970s that detailed Aboriginal accounts of "apprenticeship" have been published, it should not be thought that the conditions under which Aboriginal "apprentices" lived and worked were unknown to a contemporary white community which was accustomed to both the employment of young adolescents and the "boarding out" of white State wards as domestic servants. During the second reading debates on the Protection Act

Jim Fernando, Interview C38; removed from Angledool.
Melva Nicholls (nee Rook), Interview T41; removed from Pilliga.
Jack Campbell, Interview T51; removed from near Roseby Park.
Mona Moore (nee Fernando), Interview C52; removed from Angledool.
Violet Shay (nee Grey), Interview C56; removed from Ulgundah Island.
Florence Caldwell (nee James), Interview C56; removed from Ulgundah Island.
In addition, conversations were held with ex-apprentices Les McGrady, Kathleen Drew, Ida Williams (nee Drew) and Vicky Archibald (nee Walker). Les McGrady was removed from Euraba, Vicky Archibald from the south coast and Kathleen Drew and Ida Williams from the Kinchela area.

1 Mick Collis, Interview C12; Les McGrady; Florence Caldwell, Interview C56.
amendments of 1915, which gave the Board powers in loco parentis over any child of Aboriginal descent, four members of Parliament reported receiving a "great number of complaints" from Aborigines against the "apprenticeship" system. These were the members for the south western seats of Murray and Murrumbidgee and the northern slopes and north western seats of Namoi and Cobar.¹ Each went on to describe problems which arose either from the attitudes of employers or from faults in or abuses of the system, none of which were being remedied by the proposed amendments.

All speakers assumed that it was girls on whom the Board would focus its activity. The Chief Secretary had opened the debate by quoting Donaldson's 1912 statement to the effect that at 14 years of age "the children commence to have children" and so created "a continually increasing charge upon the state".² The four dissenting speakers pointed out in some detail that Aboriginal girls who were "apprenticed" were even more harshly dealt with than the poorly-treated white "State girls". The latter were often sought for child-minding work, arduous in itself, but according to C.S. Fern, member for Cobar, "when a black child is boarded out she is generally either hooked onto the plough or swings an axe".³

These four speakers each noted that some Aboriginal "apprentices" became pregnant during their indentures and each blamed this not on the girls' "morality" but on the sexual abuse invited by isolation on country properties or in the city away from family or other effective support. Two of these speakers were particularly critical of the position in country locations where employers were recommended as "suitable" by local police. It was argued that country police "depended for promotion on the mean settler and the mean squatter" who might gain the "apprentice". The police were also the officers supposedly inspecting the "situation" regularly to ensure the child's welfare while "apprenticed". This was a position, it was stated, in which the interests of the "apprentice" were not likely to be the first consideration.

² Ibid, V.56, p1353.
⁴ Ibid, p1953, P McGarry.
The Government countered these arguments by claiming that the Board could and did protect Aboriginal apprentices from abuse and that it did not intend, in any case, to take all Aboriginal children, but only those who were "orphaned", "neglected" or whose parents were "immoral".  

The Board's Records of Wards are available in detailed form only until 1928, but an Index of Wards shows at least names, allowing numbers to be calculated, until 1936. The Records and Index show a total of children removed as 1,427, with 321 children taken up to 1920, then 428 taken from 1921 to 1928 and a further 678 removed from 1929 to approximately 1936. If the ratio derived from the 1917 Walgett situation in which two children went into the Child Welfare system for the three made Wards of the Board, is valid then the number of children actually removed overall may have been closer to 2,400. The Board's accelerating removal of children was occurring over a period when the enumerated Aboriginal population aged 15 or under was relatively stable at around 2,800 from 1910 to 1920, then rose to 3,600 in 1930 and to 4,400 in 1936. A substantial proportion of the young Aboriginal population therefore experienced this form of Protection Board control.

The circumstances of their removal from their families were usually unhappy, although ranging in detail from the distressing scenes experienced by Margaret Tucker to the unhappy acquiescence of Jimmie Barker's mother. When removals of children were discussed with Aborigines, Donaldson's name recurred continually, although he retired from the Board in 1929 and it seems that children were taken at least as often after this as before. Yet it is Donaldson who is remembered with intense and unparalleled hatred across the eastern half of the State and who has been named "the Kids Collector" by one

1 Ibid, various speakers throughout debates.
2 APBRW.
   APB Index of Wards. The entries in this index are undated but lists of inmates at Kinchela Boys' Home are included and the latest date for these documents is 1936. It is possible, however, that this index records children removed until the end of the Protection Board period, i.e., 1940, but there is no clear evidence for this.
3 These figures are drawn from Smith's "Aboriginal Population", p129, which estimates the percentage of the enumerated population aged 15 and under to be stable at 40% throughout this period.
Walgett woman. Donaldson was apparently the most energetic of the Board's Inspectors in the pursuit of this aspect of its policy, as would be expected after his part in its formulation. It seems from the Board's Minutes that after his retirement this role devolved increasingly from the Inspector to the police and station manager.

Donaldson was often accompanied by police in his "collecting", however, and even when this was not so, the threat of police action was often raised. At times Donaldson was able to convince either parents or child that a pleasant life and interesting work was being offered but the experience of Arthur Dodd in Walgett seems to have been more usual. Arthur's step-daughter was removed in 1919:

That Donaldson done that. He just bloomin' well said, 'I'll take this girl and put her to a better home, she's no good here ...' Well, we argued the point there, had a bit of a row. He wouldn't accept it, told me about gettin' the police to take her if we wouldn't let him take her.

He said, 'When she grow up and be able to read and write she'd be able to come back here to you'. So we thought that was alright, that's how we come to let her go with him.

He just grabbed her in the first place. He talked it over with us after, tried to ease our minds ... Oh, he was a mongrel, that fella.

Such coerced consent did not "ease" Arthur Dodd's mind then or later, as the years went by and the family never heard of the girl again. This account of Donaldson's methods of gaining "consent" is consistent with the instructions which the Board repeatedly issued to its Inspectors, managers and to the police after the Cumeragunja resistance had forced it to some compromise in 1919. Parental consent was to be sought, but if refused, the officer was told to threaten and, if necessary, to initiate action under either the Protection or Neglected Children's Act to achieve removal of the child.

1 Ivy Green, Interview T37.
2 Interview C56.
3 Interview T39.
4 Ibid. This girl's name is noted in the Index as being on the "unattached" list.
5 See, for example, APBM, 15/10/1919; 12/11/1919; 23/12/1919; 25/2/1920; 2/3/1921; 1/6/1921; 10/4/1922; 20/7/1922; 18/3/1927.
The Board claimed it was only removing "orphan" or "neglected" children or those of "immoral" parents. From its own records, however, it is clear that the Board's attention was focused on girls. To 1920, 81% of children removed were female, from 1921 to 1928 the figure was 68% and from 1929 to 1936 it was 60%. This imbalance in the sex ratio of children removed was noticeable enough to appear as a high and otherwise inexplicable masculinity in the over-15 Aboriginal population from the 1910s to late in the 1930s.\(^2\)

The ages of the children when removed are available to 1928 and for this period the focus of the Board's attention can be more precisely defined. From 1912 to 1928, 68% of the children removed were 12 and over. Girls made up 70% of the number taken over this time and of these, 72% were 12 or older, while of the boys taken only 55% were 12 or older. Girls who were 12 or older in fact made up 54% of the total number of children made Wards of the Board by 1928, while boys who were 12 or older made up only 14%.\(^3\) It would seem that the Board's early intention of removing girls "approaching the age of puberty" was followed through.

Aboriginal people remember all children as being vulnerable to removal, not simply those who were suffering real neglect or who were in any sense orphans. The preceding figures strongly suggest that age and sex were the major factors in removal. This impression is confirmed by the individual Ward history forms, which show that the majority of girls removed between 1912 and 1928 had been living with both parents. The history forms required a statement of the "reasons for the Board assuming control". Occasionally, "neglected" or "orphared" appeared as "reasons" and, very rarely, "Mother [or father] leading an immoral life". Far more frequently, however, the "reasons" were: "To get her away from the surroundings of Aboriginal Station [or reserve]", "To send to service and thus improve conditions of living", "To fit for service" and, more bluntly, "To send to work" or "Being over the age of 14". Sometimes, the "reason" was

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1 APBRW.  
APB Index of Wards.  
2 Smith, "Aboriginal Population", pp131-2. Smith has pointed out the high masculinity but was unable to explain it other than to suggest "female outmigration". He was then unable to explain the disappearance of the phenomenon late in the 1930s.  
3 APBRW.
simply "Being in receipt of rations and clothes". ¹

Once the children had been removed to the custody of the Board they were, to use the Board's term, "disposed of" in a number of ways. ² Children of either sex who were under 10 years old were sent to Bomaderry, where a Home was managed by the United Aborigines Mission. Girls who were over 10 were sent to Cootamundra Home, which was established fully in 1912 and staffed by Board employees. Consistent with the lower priority which the Board placed on both removal and training of boys, the Boys' Training Home was not established until 1920 although Singleton AIM Home had been used as the Boys' Home for a couple of years prior to this. After 1920 this Home too was staffed by Board employees and in 1924 was relocated at Kinchela station, on the Drew's land, taking up more of the already limited agricultural area there but presumably chosen precisely because the rich site appeared useful for training in agricultural skills.

The stations themselves also functioned as "Training Homes" in a role which should be noted. Most had dormitories for both girls and boys, with the girls, as usual, receiving most supervision. The dormitories played a punitive role as well in the discipline of children who were already "apprenticed", Walhallow and Brewarrina being used most often for this purpose. Girls who were labelled "unsatisfactory" or who absconded from employers were likely to find themselves "transferred to Brewarrina" for a time in the dormitory. ³ This station therefore received young people from all over the State, causing some community dislocation as they married, or were forced into marriages, with local Maris.

The discipline at Brewarrina dormitory was rigid and authoritarian, and included beatings and confinement in a dark room for offences such as taking fruit from the manager's garden. The girls' common complaint was loneliness and isolation from their own families. Allegations of sexual abuse of dormitory girls by managers or their sons are too persistent to be ignored. ⁴ Susan Dennis had herself been sent to Brewarrina from the south coast. When living at the

¹ Ibid.
² Printed Ward History form, being each page of APBRW.
³ APBRW.
⁴ Interview T11; T25; T42; T18; T36; Matthews (ed), Jimmie Barker, pp148-9.
station after her marriage, Susan spent a great deal of time with similarly dislocated girls and believed that many of them married to free themselves from the rigid dormitory situation.\(^1\)

Girls in these dormitories worked hard, whether they were resident there or were ordered to report there each morning from their parents' homes on the station. Melva Nicholls, growing up on Pilliga reserve which was made a station in 1923, remembered that formal education was made secondary to the training for domestic service which the matron carried out at the dormitory. Much of this "training" involved doing the domestic work of the manager's household. Melva, like other girls before and after her, was repeatedly called away from school lessons to scrub the floors of the manager's house or do his washing.\(^2\)

At Cootamundra, as Margaret Tucker has described, the "training" also consisted of long hours of hard or tedious work. Discipline was corporal and rigid.\(^3\) Some concern over the level and nature of discipline at the Girls' Home was apparent in the Board Minutes. In 1928, a woman newly employed at the Home complained that the girls were "flogged", "slashed with a cane across the shoulders" and "generally treated with undue severity and lack of sympathy, the use of the cane being a daily occurrence".\(^4\) The services of this employee were terminated but on a later date a Board member made similar criticisms.\(^5\)

Certainly some girls hated the Home. Four retaliated against the poor and meagre food and the harsh discipline by trying to burn the Home down in 1919.\(^6\) Many of the women who were at Cootamundra, however, have mixed feelings about it: for those who were taken from their families at an early age, it was the only home they knew, and for some others the period at Cootamundra is seen in retrospect.

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1 Interview T42.
2 Interview T41.
3 Tucker, If Everyone Cared, pp97-106. Interview T11; T18; C29.
4 APBM, 27/7/1928.
5 Ibid, 2/2/1938.
6 Interview C29. APBRW, No.134. APBM, 5/2/1919.
as pleasant and stable in comparison to their later "apprenticeship". At Cootamundra they were at least with other Aboriginal girls in the same circumstances, all away from their families.

Singleton and Kinchela have an even more disturbing history. The AIM Superintendent had been sacked for "improper conduct" in 1920. His successor, T.H. Austin, may have been more restrained in behaviour but his attitude to the "training" of Aborigines is suggested by his comment that:

An educated aborigine is generally an agitator, a nuisance to himself and a menace to his own people.²

The Superintendent at Kinchela was sacked in 1931 for drunkenness.³ The man appointed in his place, A.J. McQuigan, so outraged the boys of the Home that one was transferred to Walhallow Dormitory (without, interestingly, any other punishment) after he had knocked McQuiggan unconscious in 1933.⁴ In 1934 the Board expressed alarm at McQuigan's insobriety and in 1935 senior police officers reported he had regularly punished boys by refusing them food and by tying them to a fence and beating them with lengths of hosepipe and with stock-whips.⁵ McQuiggan, however, preserved his position because of an internal conflict on the central Board, remaining in control at the Boys' Home until mid-1937.⁶ As in most single-sex authoritarian institutions, sexual abuse occurred at Kinchela, certainly in the mid-1930s but probably before also and finally came to the Board's notice in 1939.⁷

The Homes were a symbol of the Board's power over Aboriginal communities and were used to frighten children who had not been sent to them. Melva Nicholls recalls being told that at Cootamundra "they beat the girls, you were not allowed to talk to anyone, you got corn meal for breakfast with salt on it instead of sugar and if you didn't

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1 Tucker, If Everyone Cared. Interview T1; Ida Williams, Kathleen Drew.
2 Elkin, Questionnaire, 1936, Question 10, p3.
3 APBM, 3/7/1931.
4 APBRW, No.704.
5 APBM, 6/7/1934; 4/12/1935.
7 Interview C34.
8 APBM, 20/9/1939.
9 AWBM, 26/6/1940; 19/8/1941.
do the right thing there the policeman would get you, put you in a big cell and lock you up where you couldn't see anyone". If the girls were slow at their work, the Pilliga matron would say: "You don't want to go to Cootamundra, you'd better get that done". The whole "apprenticeship" system was in fact seen by Aborigines as punitive: Jack Barker remembers as a child on Brewarrina station he was warned: "Don't let the manager catch you doing that, or you'll be 'prenticed out for 6d a week".

Once a "situation" had been secured for the children, they were simply told by the authorities at the Home or the manager at the station that they had to go to work. "I didn't have any choice" is a phrase repeated constantly in relation to this issue. Until 1920, most girls were sent to homes in the city, in middle-class suburbs such as Lindfield, Vaucluse, Mosman, Ashfield and Strathfield. This presumably was a network of "good" homes built up by the philanthropic connections of the pre-1916 Board. After 1920 more girls were sent to country situations, many on properties, others in towns where they were employed by bank managers, storekeepers and, occasionally, a policeman. The vast majority of boys went to country jobs, often on dairy farms on the north coast or to the smaller sized properties of other areas. A few were sent to jobs in the city of the "houseboy" variety. B.C. Harkness, a member of the Board, employed a couple of boys in this capacity.

The Board had always assumed that Aboriginal female "apprentices" would learn not only domestic skills in their employers' homes but also a desire to emulate European lifestyles. These two combined were expected to ensure the girls' "mergence" into the white community. Having decided by 1920 that it could not make these girls disappear and that they would have to be allowed to return home, the Board placed greater stress during the 1920s on the process of instilling European cultural values. The girls were now being "uplifted" by service with "respectable families" in "first class private homes", "making them useful citizens and wives for their aboriginal brothers". "The result", the Board argued, "must be that

1 Interview T41.
2 Interview T18.
3 APBRW
4 Ibid.
the standards of life of this younger generation will be superior to those of their parents, thus paving the way for the absorption of these people into the general community".\(^1\) The women were to be vehicles of European culture, in their roles as wives and mothers, influencing the communities to which they returned. It was presumably this view of women as agents of cultural change, as well as its concern about pregnancies, which sustained the Board's focus of removal activity on girls.

Theoretically, the term of employment for both male and female "apprentices" was 4 years, but in fact it was infinitely variable, with the employer able to terminate the indentures at any time and with only the child bound to a fixed period. The employer was to provide food, clothing and dental and medical expenses and wages were set to approximate those of white State wards.\(^2\) The Board explained that it was:

...more concerned in seeing that these aboriginals are placed in good moral homes than in securing high wages.\(^3\)

Wages were paid into a Trust Fund held by the Board, to be handed over at the end of the "apprenticeship" or on the ex-"apprentice" turning 21. The Board justified its holding of wages on grounds of "morality", as it was "essential that the apprentices be kept under strict supervision to ensure their moral welfare and the control of their wages is a big factor in this connection".\(^4\) Furthermore, it was argued, "if allowed to handle their own earnings it would doubtless invariably be squandered".\(^5\)

The Board made very sure there was no chance of anything being "squandered". While Aboriginal "apprentices" always received (in trust) very similar wages to white State wards, there was a significant difference in the amount of pocket money issued to the two groups. In the 1910 Regulations to the Protection Act, pocket money, which was the proportion of total wages paid directly to Aboriginal "apprentices", was 3d per week for the first year, then 6d per week

\(^1\) APBR, 1926-27, p3.
\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) APBR, 1922-23, p3.
for the second and third years and 1/- per week in the fourth year. In 1913, these amounts were raised to 6d for the first two years, then 1/- and 1/6 for the final two years respectively. Over the same period, white State wards received 1/- and 1/6 for their first two years, 2/- in their third year and 2/6 for their fourth year.¹

In 1925, after Aboriginal political activity, questions in Parliament about the system and press criticism, the pocket money rates for Aborigines were increased to equal those of State wards.² By 1938, however, when figures are next available, there was again a discrepancy. Beginning their "apprenticeship" on 1/- pocket money per week, only 6d less than that of State wards, Aborigines finished their "apprenticeship" on 2/6 per week while State wards received 3/6 for girls and 5/- for boys.³ The meagre amount of pocket money is remembered by Aborigines with indignation: "my lousy little six-pence a week" is a commonly expressed sentiment.⁴

As for wages, Aboriginal "apprentices" in the 1920s received, as did State wards, amounts which ranged from 2/6 a week for first year girls to 5/- for fourth year girls and 2/6 for first year boys to 8/- for fourth year boys.⁵ An idea of the justice of the wages for both Aboriginal and white wards must be derived from a comparison with the wages of non-indentured labour. While a 15-year-old, second year "apprenticed" girl was paid 3/6 per week, including pocket money, in 1921, a non-"apprenticed" 15-year-old Aboriginal girl in Brewarrina at the same time could receive 10/- a week for domestic services.⁶ A general servant or a parlour maid is thought to have commanded at least £1 a week in the early 1920s.⁷

¹ APB Regulations, 41(d), NGG, 8/6/1910; 2/4/1913. SCRDCF, Miscellaneous papers, 9/6156.
² APBM, 4/9/1925. SCRDCF, Miscellaneous papers, 9/6156. The political opposition of the mid-1920s will be discussed in Chapter V.
³ PSBR, p18.
⁴ Interview T17.
⁵ APBM, 4/9/1925.
⁶ Interview T14.
In a period when domestic servants were desperately sought after\(^1\), the "apprenticeship" scheme provided an inexpensive way to acquire a servant. Rural employers became more frequent after 1920, and they were employing "apprentices" at significantly lower rates than they would have had to pay non-apprenticed girls from nearby Aboriginal communities.

The Board had not aimed to create a system of cheap labour — it had, after all, wider aims in mind — but its "apprenticeship" scheme as a mechanism for changing Aboriginal communities could not have continued had it not proved an economic proposition for employers. Only in the worst years of the Depression did the Board have trouble finding employers to take "apprentices" and had difficulties forcing employers to remit wages to Trust account\(^2\), a difficulty it solved by allowing at least some employers to lower wages.\(^3\) These difficulties do not, however, appear to have been prolonged to the point of lowering the rate of removal of children.

Not only were Aboriginal "apprentice" working for low wages but many never received the money collected at them by the Board, which appears to have made little effort to ensure that the "apprentices" were paid. If the employer had been sympathetic, he or she might press the Board to forward the money.\(^4\) If the "apprenticeship" was completed and the "apprentice" returned to a station on good terms with the Board, the manager may have arranged payment. One in every five "apprentices", however, absconded from their "situation".\(^5\) Knowing that the police and the Board would try to force them to return, the last thing a successful absconder would do would be to contact the Board and claim their wages. Even when an "apprentice" finished their term, there was no guarantee that the money would be paid over, as the Board had the discretion to hold the money for a longer period if, in its opinion, it would not be spent wisely. The parents of one girl in Walgett had to go through a lawyer in their applications to the Board for the return of her wages.\(^5\)

1 Kingston B, My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann, Melbourne, 1975, p22.
2 APBR, 1929-30, p2.
3 APBM, 24/4/1931.
4 APBRW.
5 Interview T36.
The Board's reluctance to release wages is suggested by the amount held in the "apprenticeship" Trust Fund. In 1924, this account held £8,000: equivalent to the full 4 years' wages of more than 250 girls or 150 boys.\footnote{NPD, V.96, pp1454-5, 26/8/1924. Wages owing to girls after 4 years: £31/4/-; to boys: £50/14/-. 1924 rates.} The distribution of this fund money cannot yet be traced but in 1941 the Trust still held around £8,000.\footnote{APBM, 21/4/41.} Wages had been raised somewhat and more people had been "apprenticed" by this time but there still appears to have been a substantial degree of wage retention by the Board. So that "lousy little sixpence" or at least the amount of their pocket money, has assumed an even greater significance to Aborigines because that was all many of them ever received for years of hard labour.

Employers, the Board claimed repeatedly, were carefully selected by the "Homemaker", a woman employed in 1922, in the city, or by police in country areas.\footnote{Ibid, 26/10/1922.} The Public Service Board Inquiry into the Protection Board in 1938 was dubious about this claim, stating that "the follow-up, especially in the country, and in connection with the enquiries as to the suitability of the intending employers, leaves something to be desired".\footnote{PSBR, p19.} Board members of long standing admitted in 1941 that a brief reference from local police had been all that was necessary to secure an Aboriginal "apprentice" in country areas, making possible exactly the abuses alleged in the debates over the amending legislation of 1915.\footnote{AWBM, 21/1/1941.}

It appears that employers simply approached the Board, the police or a station manager. In 1916 the Board circularized its staff with one such request from a bank manager at Kempsey who wanted "a boy about 14 or 15 years of age, full-blood preferred, who could be made generally useful about the house".\footnote{APBOL, 4/7/1916.} Aborigines believe that local employers just contacted the manager, asking for a boy or girl, and the manager provided one without inquiry into the employer's "suitability". "They knew they could just come to the Mission and get a girl to baby sit".\footnote{Interview T41.}
The "regular" inspections of the employer's home were equally haphazard. Some of the girls who worked in the city can remember a visit by the Homefinder, but to Margaret Tucker and others, these seemed inspections of their own competence and behaviour rather than an opportunity to discuss problems. The Homefinder, in any case, spent far more time with the employer than with the "apprentice".¹ Quite apart from the additional intimidation for the "apprentice" of a visit from the police, the inspecting officers in the country, none of the people interviewed who were employed outside the city can remember being "visited" by anyone. Some "apprentices" were able to leave unpleasant jobs by contacting the police, but these cases were probably rare.² The children were indeed almost entirely dependent on the good will of their employer.

The Regulations to the 1909 Protection Act did not stipulate hours and conditions of work for "apprentices", except that they be allowed to attend "Divine Service and Sunday School".³ The 1915 Amendments to the Act altered Section 11(i) specifically to dissociate the regulating of the conditions of work of Aboriginal "apprentices" from any other legislation governing children's or adolescent employment, and stipulated only that Aboriginal "apprentices" should work under conditions which the Board thought "desirable".⁴

The total lack of restriction on the hours and the type of work that "apprentices" did are common themes in Aboriginal memories. Jimmie Barker has described the routine and conditions faced by boys "apprenticed" in the country, but boys in city jobs fared little better. Billy Moore was "apprenticed" from the south coast in 1920 to a family in a large home in Burwood. He was employed as the sole gardener to look after substantial grounds and a tennis court, heavy work for a 14-year-old. Not only was he overworked, but his employers (like many others) did not fulfil the conditions of the indenture by supplying him with clothes, giving him only their son's cast-off clothing, nor was he paid pocket money. As he has said: "My lousy

1 Tucker, *If Everyone Cared*, p125; Interview T56.
2 Interview T17.
3 *APB Regulations*, 41, NGG, 8/6/1910.
little sixpence that I was supposed to get every week, failed to come along". ¹

Margaret Tucker's city "apprenticeship" was equally difficult, with hard work compounded by the evident neurosis of her employer. Girls in country areas were invariably used as drudges. Hazel Clark was "apprenticed" from Brewarrina Station to a property 50 miles away where, as she said, "I had to work for that 6d". She had to be up each morning to bring in and milk cows, then make breakfast for the men then do all the housework and all the washing. She was the only person doing this work and the only woman present: the property owner's wife, to whom Hazel was supposedly "apprenticed", was seldom there. Hazel's second "situation" was at Nyngan, where she was similarly overworked but had to look after the child of the family as well at nights and weekends. ²

Melva Nicholls was "apprenticed" in the early 1930s from Pilliga to the home of a town storekeeper, at 12 years of age. She has expressed an extremely common sentiment when she described her employment by saying, "It just meant slavery there — daylight to dark — you never had no pleasure". After three hard years in the town job Melva was sent, still "apprenticed" to a station outside Pilliga to work for a family of seven in a large, rambling house, where she cooked, washed and cleaned. In addition, she cooked for the shearsers in the season and was often made to chop wood for the stove. Once, when she had spent a long time chopping wood and made only a small pile, her employer threatened her with a stockwhip. She ran away. ³

Many children, especially girls in the city or on isolated properties, were terribly lonely, far away from home and from contact with other Aboriginal people." The Board did not wish girls to be "apprenticed" close to their families, as this would have avoided the aim of "dissociation". ⁵ While some relaxation probably occurred in jobs organized by managers or police with local employers, very few

¹ Interview T17
² Interview T25.
³ Interview T41.
⁴ Tucker, If Everyone Cared, pp108-126.
⁵ APBM, 17/4/1918.
children were able to see their family regularly. Parents were permitted, after 1920, to visit, but this "privilege" had to be approved by an officer of the Board.\footnote{Ibid, 14/5/1919.} Many parents had no idea where their children were, never having been informed and finding officials obstructive when the location of children was sought, as happened with Arthur Dodd, and the parents of Margaret Tucker and Monica Clare.\footnote{Interview T39; Tucker, If Everyone Cared, p121; Clare, Karobran, p52.} The "apprentices" themselves were at times constrained or prevented from contacting their parents because their letters were either censored or intercepted by their employers.\footnote{Tucker, If Everyone Cared, p113; Interview T11.} Those who were in touch with their parents were not able to visit them at home: only after 1920 did the Board even consider such visits and then only on the completion of the "apprenticeship".\footnote{APBOL, 2/6/1920.} "You had to do your time straight".\footnote{Interview T25.}

Beatings and physical threats occurred often. The "apprentices" were, however, isolated from their own people and from any authority they felt to be benevolent. Many, as well, had been frightened of the possible consequences of complaining. They could be sent back to the Homes, taken by the police, or just beaten again.

Many young people resisted these conditions. One method was passive resistance: they simply refused to do as they were told or did the jobs wrongly. One person interviewed who adopted this method suffered beating after beating for doing so.\footnote{Interview C34.} At least one Board manager recognized such behaviour as a strategy to return home, in which children used "sullenness, laziness, carelessness or dishonesty" as tactics.\footnote{Elkin, Questionnaire, 1936, Question 37a, p4.} Other "apprentices" became "defiant" or "disobedient": they would be transferred from one employer to another with "unsatisfactory" marked on their record forms.\footnote{APBRW.} One woman's record was marked "unsatisfactory" after she went to the police because the son of her employer had whipped her.\footnote{Interview T11; APBRW, No.542.}
The most obvious form of resistance was to try to escape. The rate of absconding was 21%: one in every five "apprentices" ran away at least once\(^1\) and others may have tried unsuccessfully. The absconder was "liable to be proceeded against and punished for absconding" and might be "removed to some home or institution as the Board may arrange".\(^2\) Although it is difficult to assess how many prosecutions took place, the Board's Records suggest the punishment was either transfer to Brewarrina or a period in one of the network of welfare homes around Sydney for delinquent children. For the girls it was often Parramatta Industrial School and occasionally a 2-to-14-day sentence in Long Bay.\(^3\) A small, but not insignificant, number of girls were committed to psychiatric institutions. This must be seen as part of the disciplinary process, where sustained resistance was interpreted as "deviance" and "mental illness". If parents intervened and removed their children from a "situation" they could be prosecuted for abducting their own children. These prosecutions were certainly undertaken, although not always successfully.\(^4\)

Melva Nicholls has described the pressures on both children and parents. After being threatened with a stockwhip she decided "to risk it" and run away. She walked many miles to the station on which her father was working:

Dad was frightened, said, 'What are you doing here?' So I told him I'd spent three hours to cut what wood I did and he was going to whip me with a big whip, so I said I'd come away. I got a bit scared and said, 'I can't go back there because he was going to whip me as it was', and so Dad took me home [to Pilliga station].

And they were going to send me away again, in fact they did come in the night to take me, but Dad came home and he stayed home and he took the gun to old Bob Constable [the manager] and old Smithers [the Inspector] and we never seen them no more.\(^5\)

Melva was succes: 'ul the first time, perhaps because she was in her final year.; indecure and because her parents sent her to re-

1 APBRW.
2 AP Act, 1909, s.11A.  
   AP (Am) Act, 1915, s.11A.
3 APBRW.
4 AP Act, 1909, s.13.  
   APBM, 5/2/1936
5 Interview T4!
lations at Brewarrina soon after. Agnes Murray was not so lucky. She was "apprenticed" in the mid-1930s on a station 12 miles out of Brewarrina and was doing all the work around the homestead, inside and out. Eventually she had had enough and walked the 12 miles into town and then 9 more out to the Mission to her family. The manager sent her back but she walked the 21 miles back again and again she was sent back. The third time she won and was allowed to stay.¹

Girls were undoubtedly subject to sexual harassment and abuse on many occasions: lonely and isolated from assistance and advice, and victims of the sexual stereotyping of white attitudes which the Protection Board had fostered, they were easy prey for male employers and others. Many of the women interviewed were sexually harassed or felt extremely vulnerable and the fear of sexual attack was often their motive for absconding.²

A significant number did become pregnant during their indentures and Henry Hardy has expressed most clearly a generally held feeling about the whole system:

The hard part was they didn't like us after the girls ... They'd come and get 'em and take 'em away. They'd have 'em down there for twelve months and they'd get 'em into trouble and they'd be comin' back with white babies. That's what we were up against. That's true that is. And it was better if they'd left 'em with their own lot, let 'em link up that way, that's my opinion of it.³

It is of course difficult to obtain accurate figures for the pregnancy rate of "apprenticed" girls. From the Board's Records, it appears that there was at least a 7% pregnancy rate: one in fourteen girls came home "with white babies". There were probably more than this: girls hurriedly sent home from jobs before the missus got back, before she found out or when she did find out, who had their babies on the missions or reserves. Most people interviewed could name at least two girls who came home pregnant, and some are the children of their mother's employer. Apart from the distress of the girl herself, the community repercussions were significant as parents and later husbands and in-laws were sometimes unhappy about acknowledging these babies. Overall, the whole process was seen as

1 Interview C32.
2 Interview T25, Interview C56.
3 Interview T5.
simply a more sophisticated method of that old game of invaders: taking our women.

The Board had to accept that most of the girls and boys it took away could not be prevented from going home eventually. Nevertheless, it was determined that their lives would still be regulated into respectability. The directive on this matter sent to managers in 1920 read: "The only solution to the difficulty [of girls becoming restless and refusing to work after 4 to 6 years] is to allow them upon attaining the age of 20 years to return to the station, with the express object on the part of the Board of allowing them to marry ... The manager might endeavour to bring about this end as far as opportunity and circumstance permit".\(^1\) This could easily be interpreted as an instruction to arrange marriages and this is certainly what happened on a number of stations.

One Brewarrina man who himself suffered from this practice commented bitterly, "it went on all the time, people who were not ready were married off. There was no time to get to know one another and for most it wasn't a success".\(^2\) The only occasion on which the Board mentioned figures was in its 1925-26 Report, in which it proudly noted that 30 "suitable marriages" of ex-"apprentices" had been arranged over the preceding year.\(^3\) Aborigines on Ulundah Island and on Toomeelah station (formerly Euraba) can remember multiple marriages all by arrangement of the manager and, again, many of these marriages were not successful.\(^4\)

Like Arthur Dodd's stepdaughter, however, not all of the children removed came home. Of those taken until 1928, 25\% did not return to their own families although some did settle in other Aboriginal communities. Of the remainder, some died during their four year term, often of tuberculosis at Waterfall Hospital. Others were committed to psychiatric hospitals and others again, like Arthur Dodd's stepdaughter, simply disappeared from the Board's Record system.\(^5\)

Although it had failed in many of its expressed aims, the Board succeeded in creating substantial disruption in Aboriginal commun-

\(^1\) APBOL, 2/6/1920.
\(^2\) Interview T17.
\(^3\) APBR, 1925-26, p3.
\(^4\) Interview T48.
\(^5\) APBRN.
ities with its "apprenticeship" system. The children taken missed
the opportunity to learn from their parents and grandparents through
the important age of puberty and most people interviewed expressed
deep regret at these years they regarded as lost. Social relations
were distorted by the removal of so many children and a dispropor-
tionate number of girls. The fact that some of them returned "with
white babies" further strained social relations and added to family
and community responsibilities. Finally, more disruptions to rela-
tionships occurred when young people were forced into marriages they
did not want.

For all of this disruption to community life, no significant
increase in the skills of Aboriginal "apprentices" was made. Non-
"apprenticed" Aborigines were able to get work and received better
money for doing it. During the Depression, when Aborigines faced
severe unemployment, the "apprentices" also suffered, although the
decrease in numbers employed and in wages is impossible to calculate
without more information. The system, however, appears to have
offered little real advantage in providing employment. "Apprentices"
did menial, drudge work, learning no trades or skills, and sometimes
hampered, as was Jimmie Barker, from the areas of employment in which
they might have been interested.

Where the Board had undoubtedly succeeded was in introducing
Aborigines to the homes of the white bourgeoisie (or at least the
petit bourgeoisie). The "apprentices" had not, however, learnt the
lessons the Board had intended, least of all a desire to leave their
communities and emulate white people. Instead, these young people
returned to their communities with not only a strong sense of having
been exploited but with a very concrete impression of the attitudes
held by white people towards them. As Margaret Tucker has explained
her feelings:

We were government property.

They wanted us to be useful, but usefulness
in their minds was as servants and that is what
we became. That was the white people's way, a
very hard way, because I have marks on my body
today from those days.1

1 Margaret Tucker, transcript of interview conducted by A Morgan,
September 1980.
Hazel Clark has explained the lesson she learned more briefly:

Those people just thought we were nothing.¹

Such lessons were not forgotten.

¹ Interview T25.
CHAPTER IV

TOWNS AND ABORIGINES:
COMMUNITY LEVEL RESISTANCE

Aboriginal associations with rural towns reflected their attempts to accommodate contemporary necessities and interests with traditional values. Most rural towns had an Aboriginal population by the turn of the century. This population was generally subject to residential segregation, living in clearly defined areas in what were known as town camps. These camps may have been on land notified as Aboriginal reserve, on Crown Land reserved for other purposes or, occasionally, on land privately owned by a white person. Where the camp was on Aboriginal reserve land, the Protection Board may have assisted the residents with building materials and occasionally negotiated with local authorities for sanitary and garbage disposal services.1

The provision of building materials was not general and most town camps were made up of dwellings which Aborigines had constructed with a combination of European and traditional materials. These dwellings were designed to be flexible in size and were arranged according to community priorities, not European aesthetics: a dwelling's location allowed proximity to relations but also some distance for privacy.2 Water, sanitary and garbage services to camps on reserve land were less common than the supply of building materials3 and camps on non-reserved land were never serviced.

Town camps were often described by local white authorities as "unsightly" and "insanitary".4 Aboriginal innovation and resourcefulness in building design went unrecognized. If the camps were "insanitary" because of lack of water, sewerage and garbage services, this reflected local white authority refusal to supply such services

1 APBR, appendices for expenditure, 1900-1939.
2 Descriptions of the camps in north western towns drawn from recorded interviews.
3 APBR, appendices for expenditure, 1900-1939.
4 These descriptions, as well as the assertion that the camps were "temporary", appear regularly through Brewarrina Municipal Council (BMC) Minutes and Moree Municipal Council (MMC) Minutes, as well as in most Council complaints to the Board, recorded in APBM.
to residences which they insisted were "temporary" although the camps had often stood for decades. Local Councils regarded provision of such services as validations of the camps which would serve to perpetuate their existence.

Town camps were usually composed of a core of families who were living within, or as close as possible to, the country which was of significance to them. The distance from country of significance clearly varied from region to region: in general, where European land use was most intensive, Aborigines had been forced furthest away from their own country in the most detailed sense. Yet a high correlation can be found, throughout the period under study, between the language spoken by the permanent residents of a camp and the language traditionally spoken in that area, both in the low intensity land use districts of the north west and high intensity land use districts around Yass and on the north coast. Aboriginal decisions about which town they lived in were being made on different criteria than the decisions of white town residents.

The other Aboriginal residents of town camps might be people for whom another community was regarded as home. Some Aboriginal men, in particular if young and single, travelled long distances away from their own country searching for work or following seasonal work movement patterns such as that of shearing or harvesting. Some of these travellers married into the camp community. Another factor in the movement of individuals was the Aboriginal response to depopulation. As a community's numbers were reduced, appropriate marriage partners had to be sought outside language boundaries. There appears to have been considerable movement of young men from the south coast to the north coast for this reason. Dislocation of individuals also occurred as the Board's "apprenticeship" scheme accelerated and young

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1 Descriptions of the population composition of north western camps drawn from recorded interviews and confirmed by Reay, "Native Thought" and "Half-Caste Aboriginal Community".


3 Interviews T3, T5, T6, T16, T27, T30, T35, T45.

4 Interviews T51, C61.
people were moved around the State for "service". At Brewarrina station, the role of the dormitory in the Board's disciplinary structure for "apprentices" brought many young people to the area from great distances. Some of these people married into the Brewarrina community, living either at the station or the town camp.¹ The individuals from other districts who were linked by marriage to the core residents of the camp thereby gained a commitment to the location of the camp while usually retaining links with their own community and country.

The town camp communities therefore had a social integrity and dynamic of their own which bore no relation to the social structures of the white town population. Yet the existence of the camps also reflected the residential and social segregation imposed by white townspeople. Both elements of the nature of town camps have been suggested in Reg Murray's comments on his travels in search of work in the north west and northern slopes regions in the 1920s:

Everywhere we went, where there were big mobs of people [Matis], they'd welcome us, we'd enjoy ourselves. We couldn't enjoy ourselves in the town so we had to go to the camping grounds.²

Aboriginal choices as to which town they lived in permanently were made on grounds different to whites but their general interests in living near towns were very similar to those of whites. Aborigines wanted access to services such as schools, doctors, hospitals and stores and to entertainments, like hotels and, in the 1920s, picture shows, to travelling boxing shows, rodeos and circuses.³ Towns also allowed access to employment: as surrounding land use intensified the town became an essential point of contact between Aboriginal male and female workers and rural employers.⁴ Work within towns, however, was rarely offered to Aboriginal men. It was the labour of Aboriginal women as private domestics or in the heavy laundering and cleaning work of hospitals, stores, hotels and boarding houses which provided a fragile economic link between camp and town.⁵

1 Interviews T17, T42.
2 Interviews T45.
3 All interviews conducted in Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett.
4 Ibid.
5 Employment of Aboriginal women is impossible to enumerate. The police census returns at times refer to women in domestic employ-
The town services and facilities to which Aborigines were seeking access were seldom freely given even when not technically segregated. The residential segregation of town and camp was maintained by a consensus among town lessees. As Marie Reay observed in Walgett and Brewarrina:

Houses are let to Aboriginal tenants when their condition is such that white people will not live in them.¹

The Whye family's attempt to rent a house in Brewarrina in the mid-1920s was typical. After living in a camp of their own construction on the Bourke road, the family was finally able to rent a house, which was old, dilapidated and barely more comfortable than the camp. After a short time, the Council condemned the house as uninhabitable and ordered its demolition and the Whye family, with "nowhere else to go", moved to the riverbank camp.² Other families repeated this cycle from the camp to a rented house and back to the camp, although at least one Brewarrina Mari family was able to buy a house in the town, only to lose it to the Council for non-payment of rates during the Depression.³

As Protection Board power over Aboriginal children increased, greater pressure was placed on Aboriginal parents to obtain some form of schooling for their children to avoid Board charges of neglect. Where public schools were formally segregated, Catholic schools sometimes offered an alternative. This occurred at a number of places on the north coast and at Yass, but was not a state-wide practice.⁴ At Bourke and Brewarrina, where the public schools were never officially

¹ Reay M, "Housing in North West New South Wales" in The Aborigines Protector, V.II, 1, June 1946, p15.
² Interview T14.
³ Interview T7.
⁴ Bowraville and Yass public school files, 1915-1930, DEIL.
segregated, Mari children were either refused entry or made most unwelcome at the convent schools. At least one de facto segregated school functioned in these towns even if it were not the public school.¹ Where Catholic schools were open to Aborigines, the standard of education offered might be very different from that given to white pupils. At Yass, Guris were taught only 2 hours a day at the convent and, as one parent complained, even that time contained "too much scripture and not enough lessons".² Should neither public nor Catholic schools be open, missionary schools operated, like that of the Aborigines Inland Mission in Walgett. Here Maris were schooled in a bush timber frame hut with hessian bags strung around the top of the open "walls" for shade and a missionary-chosen text emblazoned across the front, reminding the children that "Christ Died for Our Sins".³

In the north west and, no doubt, in other areas, Maris preferred their own healers and medicine for some types of illness. The similarity between Mari and Chinese medicine was part of the reason that Maris consulted the Chinese herbalist in Walgett before they would go to a white doctor or the hospital.⁴ There was, however, often little choice: white doctors might be available to Aborigines only when no white patients were present and Aborigines would be made to enter and leave by a separate door.⁵ Hospitals were usually practising some form of spatial segregation within wards and calls by whites for entirely separate hospital facilities were made with increasing frequency in the 1920s.⁶

Shopping facilities, too, might be segregated, with some merchants declining to serve Aborigines.⁷ Limited access to hotels and

1 Interview T55.
2 JH Brigden to Regional Inspector, 15/3/1929, Yass public school files, DEIL.
3 Interviews T36, T41, T45. For photograph, see Jeans DN and Spearritt P, The Open Air Museum, Sydney, 1980, plate 49, p43. The authors have assumed the structure was a chapel but it fulfilled both roles as school and church.
4 Interview T45.
6 Interviews conducted in Brewarrina and Walgett. Demands for hospital segregations in the 1920s to be discussed later in this chapter.
7 Interviews conducted in Brewarrina and Walgett. Reay, "Half-Caste Aboriginal Community", p297.
alcohol was maintained until the 1918 amendments to the Protector Act. After this, the supply of alcohol was prohibited to all Aborigines and so they were forced into "sly " deals with documents or to using methylated spirits. Aborigines in sporting events like boxing, sprints and horsemanship exhibitions was welcomed but other town social functions were segregated. When picture shows became established, Aborigines were admitted only to roped-off sections, either too close or too far away from the screen and with the hardest seats, if any were provided at all.

The restrictions on access to town services and facilities added to the reasons Aborigines had for wishing to remain in a particular town. The most important issues were employment and education. Once an Aboriginal worker had become "known" to either town or out-of-town employers, prospects of employment were improved. Establishing oneself in a different town would require building up a new set of employer contacts, a time consuming process in the face of prevailing negative stereotypes of Aboriginal labour. The issue of schooling was increasingly important as Protection Board removal activity posed a growing threat. Access to any form of education was relatively difficult by the late 1910s so once enrolment had been achieved Aborigines were more determined to stay in the town where schooling was available to them. These two factors combined with Aboriginal interest in remaining close to country of significance to form the basis of Aboriginal association with a particular town.

There are two different contexts in which to view the towns. One is in a "normal" situation, when mechanisms for the routine exercise of power functioned continuously but were not necessarily documented. In an attempt to suggest this day-to-day situation, the recollections of Maris from Collarenebri, Walgett and Brewarrina of their experiences in the 1920s and 1930s will be juxtaposed with a brief discussion of some documented white attitudes expressed over the same

1 Interviews conducted in Brewarrina and Walgett.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Reay, "Half-Caste Aboriginal Community", p299.
period. This will be followed by an outline of the structures of power within country towns which contributed to the maintenance of the "normal".

The second context in which to view towns is in a situation of overt conflict, to examine the initiating factors, the issues of contention and the methods used by white townspeople to mobilize power in their own interest. To this end, the course of events in a number of western towns through the 1920s will be described. In discussion of both these contexts, observations will be made which are relevant to Aboriginal-town relations across the State. The coastal situation during the 1920s led to a differing form of Aboriginal political organization, however, and will be described in the following chapter.

THE "NORMAL" SITUATION

MARI RECOLLECTIONS

No matter how long a Mari might live around one town, the gulf between Aboriginal and white communities remained immense and unbridged. Kathleen Dodd has recalled her experience of Collarenebri:

Before, when I was . . . id, we couldn't go near white people; or . . . white people come down. If they wanted mens to go and work or anything, they'd do that, but they would never let 'em into pubs like they do now . . . White men wasn't allowed into the camp. Dark people couldn't mix up without they were working for them . . .

This isolation extended to those institutions with pretensions to universality, like the Christian Church. Maris were made to feel unwelcome at services of the established Churches. Non-conformist missions, such as the Aborigines Inland Mission, ministered to Aborigines, but their meetings were in effect segregated and so simply reinforced the myth of separate needs and capacities.

1 Interview T40.
2 Matthews (ed), Jimmie Barker, p94.
Another myth was the loudly self-proclaimed egalitarianism of the shearing sheds. Relationships and even friendships did form between whites and Maris in the work situation of the pastoral properties and particularly in the union struggles of the shearing industry. However such relationships rarely withstood the intensely polarizing pressures from white townspeople or the division created by the legislation refusing Aborigines access to alcohol.¹ Those white people who did openly and habitually associate with Maris were usually from the poorest sections of the white working class in the town. Other whites in the town accounted for such relationships with blacks by inventing Aboriginal ancestors for these unorthodox whites and so confirmed their own reassuring myth of the pristine isolation of the races.² Rather than creating a bridge between white and black communities, such relationships simply resulted in the social isolation of those individual whites foolhardy or courageous enough to cross the racial boundary.

The reverse side of this white myth was the continuing sexual contact between, usually, white men and Aboriginal women. Openly acknowledged formal or de facto marriages may have been limited to members of the white working class, at least where the partner of Aboriginal descent was visibly so, but aside from these relationships there was the clandestine sexual contact, prostitution and rape initiated by white men of all social classes in the towns. In Brewarrina, for example, a Shire President of long standing maintained a "secret" relationship with a Mari woman for many years. Maris recounting the story display their contempt for white hypocrisy: such "secrets" were only concealed in the white community and were open and bitterly resented knowledge in the camps.³

The social isolation of the Mari communities was not a neutral thing: Maris were well aware of the hostility which many whites felt towards them. Val Mingo, a Mari from Queensland who settled in Brewarrina, explained:

There was this colour bar ... knocking about in different towns, you'd see some that didn't go much on you, pass some remark ...⁴

1 Reay, "Half-Caste Aboriginal Community", p299. Interview T57.
3 Not surprisingly, no-one wished to be quoted in relation to this particular case, but all accounts are totally consistent.
4 Interview T3.
Jimmie Barker spoke about the effect this had on him:

... I found the attitude of white people to my colour a constant strain. Even a visit to the cafe or a shop was an effort. When a dark person entered he would usually have to listen to comments on his colour and low social position and would probably have to wait a long time to be served. It was not what they said to me about my colour that worried me, it was having to listen to it so often. In the course of a day in town I heard unpleasant remarks and jokes countless times ... One gets used to being called 'Abo', 'buck-toothed nigger', 'Jacky', 'boong', 'charcoal' and 'no-good dirty nigger'. To the people who called us these things it was all good fun; for us it was depressing and horrible.¹

Other than the employment situation, there were two main areas of contact between Maris and whites in towns. The first was at school, between the children of both communities. The second was the contact between Maris and the undisguised mechanisms for social control, both official and unofficial. The official arm of control was made up of the agents for the administration of justice: the police, the justices of the peace and the magistrates. Unofficially, control was maintained by vigilante gangs of white thugs, Australia's less formal, but only marginally less efficient, version of the Ku Klux Klan.

The experience of Mari children in white public schools was uniformly unhappy. Even in schools which were not segregated, an awareness of hostility was always present. Margaret Parker explained that her daughter was not happy at the public school in Brewarrina.

She could see they didn't like the dark kiddies, but she stood her ground.²

Henry Hardy and his sister were two of the very few Mari children admitted to the public school in Collarenebri, largely through the persistence of one white supporter, in the early 1910s.

He got me and me sister in there for a while, but it was hard to put up with ... you were sort of condemned. We had to get away from the white kiddies, we had to go round the front and play there, me and me sister. I'd see 'em gettin' little stones, chuckin' 'em at her. When we went in there, then, sit down and start to do our work, they'd walk past you, pinch you on the back of the neck and all that sort of thing, and oh, I

¹ Matthews, Jimmie Barker, p123.
² Interview T7.
had a few blues ... said to Father, 'oh, you'd better take me out of this!' One day they had a brawl on. My sister was going home, and I went short cut to get some bread ... and I seen two girls and a boy gettin' into me sister. I cut back then, and I into them. Well, they put me behind the blackboard next day for an hour over this — used to punish you like that. Ah, it was terrible.¹

Thirty years later, the younger Flick children were among the first admitted to Collarenebri school when it was briefly desegregated. Isabel Flick described what happened to her brother, Jimmy and sister, Clare:

They were the third family to go in, we weren't so fair, you see. So they took the fairest kids in, and then the second fairest lot. When it was our turn, I remember, the youngest brother would come home every day, just bashed up, or his clothes all torn about, and Clare was so miserable. They'd cry about how they didn't want to go to school and 'They call you black' and all this sort of thing. And Dad sayin', 'Well, get it into your head, you are black, and you are entitled to go to that school, and they're not goin' to stop you, just keep on goin'. And if you've got to fight, well, you've got to fight'. This went on and on ... I don't see how they could have possibly learnt anything, when they're sittin' there and all they're thinkin' about is, y'know, they're goin' to fight this bloke when they get out of the class. I think that was always on their minds. So they didn't learn that much ...²

For the Maris of these towns, contact with the police was regular and generally unpleasant. Jimmie Barker has recalled that the normal police form of address to Maris was "boong" or "charcoal" and that police frequently arrested Maris, who were in Jimmie's opinion innocent, and then subjected them to bashings — they were handcuffed. He witnessed one public and unprovoked attack by police which left the Mari victim unconscious. The death of this man some months later was attributed by Maris to the police assault. As Jimmie commented:

We had every reason to fear the police.³

Val Mingo has summed up the common feeling and experience by saying:

¹ Interview T5.
² Interview T48.
³ Matthews, Jimmie Barker, p145.
"The police had all the power".¹

As in other towns, the police in Walgett in the 1920s and 1930s would consistently harass Maris, as Don Nicholls remembers:

They'd chip anyone. As long as you had a bit of dark colour in you, they'd chip you.²

Both Don and Melva Nicholls have described the curfew which operated in Walgett in the 1920s and 1930s:

We had no rights to go anywhere, you couldn't be seen up the street after 6 o'clock at night, unless you had good reason, like working.

Interviewer: Would the police stop you?

Yes, my word. And if we used to have bags, goin' home (people used to give us food and that sometimes, to take home) they'd pull you up, have a look in, see what you had in there. They'd think we'd be stealing something, I thought that way, anyway ... They were horrible, really ...³

Reg Murray, too recalls the curfew in Walgett and describes what happened if a Marri was caught on the streets after 6pm:

They'd [the police] give 'em a toe up the backside and hunt 'em out, or they'd arrest 'em and charge 'em with drunkenness, something like that, and they'd be a disgrace to put some other charges on 'em [too] ... They went beyond their powers in a lot of ways ... They still do it. Mostly they get a crack in these country towns see, they got the place to themselves.⁴

Don Nicholls claims the police fabricated evidence against him, as on the occasion he was held in gaol overnight on a charge of "riotous behaviour" for allegedly swearing in front of a woman shopkeeper. He had been arrested on a Sunday, when this particular store was closed: "They'd just tell lies about you", he maintains.⁵

Aboriginal statements that police fabricated evidence are invariably linked with claims that police evidence was always accepted in the courts. Reg Murray says:

See, it: ... today, you can have a bit of a go and ... and up for your rights. If you had a go then, whether you pleaded guilty or not guilty, you'd still get fined 2 or 4 days.⁶

1 Interview T3.
2 Interview T41.
3 Ibid.
4 Interview T45.
5 Interview T41.
6 Interview T45.
Henry Hardy maintains that there were many false arrests in Brewarrina in the 1930s, particularly on charges of drunkenness, and that police would swear in court that a sober man was drunk.

You had no say at all — No, no say. If they say you were drunk well that was it. No matter how much education you had, try to talk up for yourself, it wasn’t recognised, you’d be had for drunkenness.¹

While vagrancy and cohabiting laws were said to have been used in Brewarrina against Maris in the same way as that concerning drunkenness, it was the latter which was used most often. Jack Barker has analysed the situation in Brewarrina in the following way:

These towns rode on the sheep’s back, and the grazier, he was indispensable ... He could come in and stagger down the street, he could drive his Rolls Royce down the street drunk, on the wrong side of the street and the police’d just laugh at him. But if an Aboriginal walked down the street, they’d pinch ’im, like 4 miles out of town, or they’d pinch ’im down there over the gully in the old common and they’d stand up in court next day and say, ’I arrested the defendant in Bathurst Street, Your Worship, very much under the influence of liquor’. Bathurst Street is the main street: of course, every arrest they made, whether it be 10 miles out or 10 thousand miles out, it’d still be in Bathurst Street, so they could sheet home the evidence against ’im. Then they’d say, ’Alright this man’s a repeated offender, Your Worship, he’s been up before the bench three times, I’d like to see him dried out for 3 months in Dubbo’, then the two JP’s’d say, ’Oh, three months in Dubbo then’. See, that’s the way they done it. This was cut and dried before they went in thcrc ... ²

The bitterness engendered by police-Aboriginal contacts is obvious in the statements of these Maris.

Isabel Flick describes some of the effects such police actions had on Maris in the 1930s in Collarenebri:

There was always a dreadful fear about the police, and that feeling went right on up until the late 50s ... and, of course, there was the court cases and everybody was "Guilty" of course, they were always "Guilty" until the Aboriginal Legal Service came in ... But some Maris used to stand up or run away from the police, and then they were certainly brought in, and charged with things like resisting arrest. But they were "Guilty", definitely "Guilty", before they went in.

1 Interview T6.
2 Interview T18.
I feared the police ... everyone feared them. Because you wouldn't know when they were going to do the rounds. And they could just walk into your house, didn't matter where you was. Like in our little camp, they could just walk in, didn't matter if you were gettin' dressed or in the bath or what ... (we used to have those old round bath tubs) ... Well, they never did ask, 'Could they come in', they just walked in and looked around and screwed their noses up ...

And if there was someone there that they thought was drunk — they only had to think he was drunk — they'd pick 'im up and he'd be in gaol for ... oh ... weeks, months, sometimes, cleanin' the yard up and so forth.

We were just afraid because we'd see everybody bein' herded into little jeeps — I saw sixteen thrown into the back of a little jeep once and taken and locked up — and everybody'd feel so disillusioned and frightened. It was just a general fear — as soon as you'd see the jeep comin', everybody'd be sittin' around so proper. And if there was a drunk at somebody's house, even though he wasn't doin' any harm, they'd try to get rid of him, so they wouldn't get involved in the police action — they knew it was comin' up, they [police] could quite easily say, 'What have you got this so-and-so hanging around your place for?' And it might be their uncle or nephew, or it might even be their own son ... I remember that very clearly.'

Individuals who fought the police were, as Isabel, Jack and Reg relate, simply charged with more offences, and convicted on more fabricated evidence. Sometimes, however, victories were won in this way, even if they were short lived, and it gave Maris generally tremendous satisfaction to see the police getting some of their own back. Arthur Dodd, for example, gleefully recounted how a single police officer went to Gingie reserve, out of Walgett, in the early 1940s, and tried to arrest two Maris on charges of drunkenness. He was soundly beaten and sent back to town, and although more police arrested the Maris later in the night, it is obvious that Arthur felt that at least some summary justice had been achieved.²

Violence was not limited to encounters with the police. In Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett and Moree gangs of white men would seek out and assault Maris.³ This cannot be dismissed as "the odd street

1 Interview T48.
2 Interview T35.
3 Jimmie Barker, Transcripts, AIAS, F Tape 117.
brawl". As Jimmie Barker has described the situation in the early 1920s:

During those years country towns usually had a group of whites waiting around to beat up the black man. The black man always had to fight a mob ... The police were not well disposed to the dark people and did nothing to stop these bashings.²

Ray McHughes described a group of whites in Brewarrina who habitually beat up Maris and drove them off the streets in the 1920s. The gangs would wait at the Barwon Bridge, just out of town, and confront Maris, going to or coming from the station, in order to fight them. It was dangerous, Ray maintained, for Maris to come into town on their own, as there would be no support from the police, who always backed the whites.³

Val Mingo agreed that Maris from the station were hesitant about coming into Brewarrina town:

Not the slightest doubt about that — they were nervous to tackle with the mobs there, they were sort of a clique. They had a set on Aboriginals — They was up against 'em, didn't want to see 'em here ... They'd tear into them, specially if they had the numbers, like sure of defeating them.⁴

Don Nicholls has described a similar situation in Walgett in the 1920s and 1930s:

Oh, the whites used to pick on the dark fellas here ... They'd take hobble chains to the picture show, and when they came out they'd into us with the hobble chains ... Oh, we used to fight every night. Whenever we come along they'd into y' with the hobble chain, then when you hit back, then you'd be picked up.

Interviewer: So the police wouldn't stop the whites beating you up?

Oh, no, wouldn't stop 'em, but they'd pick you up if you fought back. They wouldn't bother about a white man.⁵

Gangs of thugs such as this could not have continued to harass Maris without the tacit support of the police, in the form of the police refusal to arrest the white instigators of such clashes.

1 Broome, Aboriginal Australians, p155.
2 Jimmie Barker, Transcripts, ALAS, F Tapes 94B, 117.
3 Interview T22.
4 Interview T23.
5 Interview T41.
Maris fought these gangs, in self-defence, and Val Mingo has described an extremely large fight which occurred in Brewarrina around 1936, when town whites were particularly anxious about rising numbers of Maris in the town. This occasion was one of the few remembered in which the police took a neutral role in that they arrested no one.

A couple started a fight here one day, and there was a white bloke and a dark bloke and of course a lot of us started looking on, and then they [the whites] started into him [the Mari fighter] and we other dark fellas were about so we into them. Anyhow, we belted the tripe out of them! Things were better from then on, 'cause they could see that we could hold them at any time. A few white fellas stepped in with us too, on our side — we had some sympathizers too. The police came there but they never arrested nobody — they reckoned they was a lot of wolves that wanted belting, so they was sympathetic with us, that had the victory.¹

Such victories were only won when Maris could effectively confront violence with violence and one can speculate as to whether the lack of police arrests on this occasion was not the result of their intimidation by a Mari show of force. Don Nicholls also feels that things in Walgett improved somewhat after the Maris "knocked the leader out"² but Marie Reay witnessed the continued activity of these gangs in the early 1940s, writing:

... a group of headstrong white youths existed; who continually provoke the aborigines to fight ... These youth provoke the aborigines to assault them, and the fighting develops into serious and frequent disturbances. When these youths are out of town there is little trouble with the aborigines in the town, but on their return there is an immediate outbreak of street brawls.³

That Aborigines were still fighting these battles into the 1940s suggests that violent invasion is a continuing process. Violence was not limited to these western towns. Bert Marr, a Guri from Taree, and Jack Campbell, from near Kempsey, have described similar situations existing in both these towns in the 1930s, with all the

1 Interview T23.
2 Interview T41.
3 Reay, "Half-Caste Aboriginal Community", p301.
elements of police harassment, curfews and assaults by both police and vigilante gangs on Guris.¹

Maris felt they faced a wall of hostility and violence — in the schools, from the police and from the white gangs. Their accounts are corroborated by contemporary reports such as Marie Reay's and by the reports of violence in the schools which appear in the Education Department records.² Occasional intercessions by whites in support of Maris, whether in the struggles to enter the schools or in the battles waged in the streets, only served to emphasise the seeming consensus among the rest of the white population in their opposition to the presence of Aborigines.

SOME SOURCES OF WHITE ATTITUDES

White attitudes to Aborigines were and are extremely complex. Caroline Kelly compared attitudes held in towns servicing the pastoral industry and those servicing agricultural and dairying industries in the late 1930s. She reported that the attitudes held by a town's middle class varied according to the nature of the surrounding rural industry. The middle class of towns which serviced the pastoral industry expressed views which were close to the rigidly deterministic stereotypes of Aborigines which Kelly heard expressed by pastoral employers, while the middle class of towns in coastal dairying and agricultural areas appeared more liberal. She believed the working class held attitudes more sympathetic to Aborigines. Kelly did not consider the question of whether higher white populations in coastal areas allowed a wider latitude for individual white dissent.³

Marie Reay analysed white attitudes in towns which serviced the pastoral industry, Brewarrina, Collarenebri and Walgett, in the early 1940s. She confirmed the influence held over the town middle class by the large scale pastoralists of the district, but detected little difference between middle class and working class attitudes.⁴ Both

¹ Interviews T1, T51.
² See, eg, Dr Donnellan to Chief Inspector, 30/3/1938, Brewarrina public school files, DEIL.
³ Kelly, "Reaction of White Groups".
⁴ Reay, "Half-Caste Aboriginal Community".
Kelly and Reay noted that the various classes in all towns they studied came closest to mutual agreement on the issue of interracial marriage or sexual contact: they all professed to oppose it, differing only in their degree of vehemence.

Reay gained the impression that white townspeople were constantly suspicious of and, felt threatened by, Aborigines. Street disturbances in which Aborigines were involved led to complaints "that the Aborigines want to 'take the town'". In one town (apparently Brewarrina), Reay noted that police stopped Aborigines using their own language in the streets on the excuse that:

'They could be swearing at us, for all we know. Or they might be plotting a revolution.'

The irrationality of white paranoia is revealed in Reay's description of the motivations of the white street gangs who harassed Aborigines in Walgett. Their stated reasons related to an alleged rape of a white woman by 2 Aborigines in 1940. As the gangs were active before this and in other towns, this incident was an excuse rather than a reason for the violence. The thinking of this Walgett gang reflected what they expected other whites in the town to see as an acceptable justification for their actions:

These youths ... are obsessed with the idea that they must protect the white women of the town from the Aborigines and prevent the Aborigines from overrunning the town. They are convinced that the [rape] was the beginning of an Aboriginal campaign to take back the country by murdering the white males and raping the females.

Another source which documents white attitudes in the 1919 to 1939 period is the correspondence relating to school segregations. The Education Department's "exclusion on demand" policy was firmly established after 1900 and it was only in the mid-1930s that the Minister and the Department became uncomfortable enough with the policy to make detailed investigations of white parents' complaints. Until then the records reveal only the reasons offered by white parents. The more comprehensive investigations of the 1930s provide additional comments from observers who might be distanced from the townspeople's influence, such as a Departmental doctor or regional

1 Ibid, p297.
2 Reay, "Native Thought in Rural New South Wales" in Oceania, XX, 2, December 1949, p91.
3 Reay, "Half-Caste Aboriginal Community", p301.
Inspector of Schools. As most north coast school segregations had occurred before this time, the image of white attitudes gained from the school segregation records may suffer the loss of an important comparative regional factor.

All of the school segregation demands, from all periods, begin with an identical set of reasons being presented to the Department. In the segregations of the 1930s, these initial reasons peeled off on deeper investigation in a predictable sequence. There are enough indications in the reasons volunteered by parents in the earlier segregation correspondence to suggest that had more investigations been carried out, similar underlying reasons would have been revealed.

The first reason presented in demands for segregation was that Aboriginal children were "dirty" and "smelly". This reason was either accompanied or closely followed by accusations that Aboriginal children suffered from diseases such as pediculosis ("nits"), ringworm and scabies, the inevitable diseases of poverty. Such reasons were usually enough through the 1910s and 1920s to ensure the permanent exclusion of all Aboriginal children. The only comment necessary on this is the statement of an Education Department Medical Officer in 1937, in specific reference to these conditions:

Such diseases are commonly found in any type of school in NSW and thus, although the conditions are unhygienic, they could not be considered a danger to other children ... Such conditions would certainly not be considered sufficient grounds for the permanent exclusion of the children.¹

Doctors, however, had never been asked to investigate such "reasons" before the 1930s, and the accusation of white parents had been enough for the Department.

When further questions were asked in the 1930s, or when parents offered further reasons in earlier exclusions, the next issue raised was that of the "morals" of the Aboriginal children, who were said to undergo "early sexual development". At the same time, the "disease" argument was more explicitly related to something which could be caught if children "shared the same outhouses".² This veiled refer-

¹ Principal Medical Officer to Undersecretary, Department of Education, 6/10/1937, Bomaderry public school files, DELL.

² This phrase, or a variant of it, appeared in many school files, for example, Yass, 1929; Bomaderry, 1937; Woolbrook, 1937; Darlington Point, 1936.
ence to venereal disease did not (nor was it meant to) mislead any-
one: not the Education Department officials and doctors, nor the
police nor the Protection Board and least of all the Aboriginal par-
ents of the children against whom the charge was made.\textsuperscript{1} The whites
of Yass were unusually blunt, referring in 1929 to "one particular
venereal disease which could be transmitted through the agency of a
child".\textsuperscript{2} Guri parents responded angrily:

There were some people in the town objected to
them going to the public school as they suspected
them of having a venereal disease, but the com-
plaint about them having such a disease is quite
untrue.\textsuperscript{3}

Once again, on the few occasions when such complaints were in-
vestigated by either doctors or Education Department Inspectors who
were not openly partisan to the townspeople, the accusations were
shown to be unfounded. There was, of course, no venereal disease
which could be "transmitted through the agency of a child" but
neither was venereal disease found to be present at higher levels in
the Aboriginal community than in the white community.\textsuperscript{4} One regional
inspector, commenting on the Woolbrook segregation demand of 1937
which took place after two Aboriginal men, who did not have children
at the school, were ordered by police to report to a doctor as sus-
ppected sufferers of venereal disease, noted:

No similar action would have been even con-
templated if VD had been found in a white man,
even if he had children attending the school.\textsuperscript{5}

After asking more questions, such relatively independent investi-
gators reported to the Education Department that in fact the

\begin{enumerate}
\item Various examples of police, Education Department Inspectors or
doctors pointing out that this was in fact the accusation can be
found throughout the public school files relating to segregations.
\item Report of P & C Meeting, in unnamed Yass newspaper, 24/6/1929, in
an article titled "Black and White — Should They Mingle?" Yass
public school files, DEIL.
\item Mrs Bertha Bell to Department of Education, 9/10/1929. Yass
public school files, DEIL.
\item Principal Medical Officer to Undersecretary, Department of Educa-
tion, 6/10/1937, Bomaderry public school files, DEIL.
Principal Medical Officer to Undersecretary, Department of Educa-
tion, 20/4/1938, in relation to both Darlington Point and
Brewarrina. Darlington Point public school files, DEIL.
\item Inspector HP Willcock to Chief Inspector, 7/7/1937, Woolbrook
public school files, DEIL.
\end{enumerate}
venereal disease accusation was "a side issue", a mask for a deeper fear that social contact between white and Aboriginal children at school would lead to either sexual relationships or marriages in later life. Only when pushed by a series of investigations were white parents prepared openly to voice this fear, as was done in the protracted disputes at Darlington Point and Brewarrina.

Even this, however, was not the essential issue. As the Darlington Point Progress Association finally admitted, in 1938, sexual relationships and marriages had occurred and continued to occur in the town. The Protection Board pointed out the impracticability of any attempt to "determine who are Aborigines within the meaning of the Act" at Brewarrina because of "the peculiar position of persons of dark blood" in the town, a pointed reference to the degree of racial mixture in the "white" population itself. The editor of that town's newspaper was, among numbers of other "white" people, a descendant of Maris although he did not acknowledge the fact. The "white" townspeople who demanded segregations were not only attempting to protect the racial "purity" of their own descendants, but were attempting to shore up a myth about the racial "purity" of the "white" community.

This was nowhere better illustrated than in Tibooburra, where a petition was signed in 1935 by 17 "parents and guardians" asking that "Aboriginal children be prevented from attending" the school because of "sore eyes, ringworm" and "infections that white children are not usually subject to". This document was not unusual: the same issues of disease and mysterious "infections" were raised, and the

1 Ibid.
Dr Donnellan to Principal Medical Officer, Department of Education, 30/3/1938, Brewarrina public school files, DEIL.

2 Darlington Point and District Progress Association to Minister for Education, 2/4/1938, Darlington Point public school files, DEIL. Inspector JN Harrison to Chief Inspector, 5/9/1939, Brewarrina public school files, DEIL.

3 Darlington Point and District Progress Association to Minister for Education, 22/6/1938.

4 APB to Department of Education, 15/10/1936, Brewarrina public school files, DEIL.

5 Interview T24.

6 Seventeen "parents and guardians of children attending Tibooburra public school" to EM Horsington MLA, 16/3/1935, Tibooburra public school files, DEIL.
racial lines for the signatories were clearly drawn. They saw no need to define "Aborigines" or "whites" as the demarcation of the races was, in their minds, quite distinct. The Education Department was little interested, and after noting that the exclusion of Aboriginal children would not affect the "stability" of the school it routinely approved the segregation.¹

Problems arose only because this instruction was entrusted to a teacher who was new to the town and so not conversant with local mythology. This teacher therefore excluded all those children who appeared to him to be of Aboriginal descent, exactly as the petitioners had requested, only to find that he had excluded the children of some of the petitioners.² The consequent confusion, not to say embarrassment, resulted in all the children, black or "white", being readmitted to the school and for two years undignified squabbles continued as to who was indeed "white" and who "black".³ More such debacles would probably have occurred had more teachers who were new to the country town in question, been given instructions to exclude all Aboriginal children.

Fears concerning the racial composition of the contemporary "white" population and their future descendants reflected the enormous implications this issue carried in relation to status within a town community, not only for the individual who might have a public relationship with an Aboriginal person but for his or her whole family. These were not the only fears reflected in the school segregation documents. The fear of economic competition was raised at Huskisson in 1927, when it was admitted that the white fishermen there believed that if Guri parents from Roseby Park station could enrol their children in that town's public school, Gurus would leave the station with its "special" school and settle in the town. As most Roseby Park Gurus were also fishermen, whites saw their livelihood under threat." Nor were the views expressed in the school

1 Inspector R Gilbert to Chief Inspector, 22/4/1935, Tibooburra public school file, DEIL.
3 EM Horsington MLA, to Minister for Education, 27/9/1935 and the following correspondence for 1936 and 1937 in Tibooburra public school file, DEIL.
4 Inspector D Robertson, Child Welfare Department, to Director of Education, 29/4/1927, Huskisson public school files, DEIL.
segregation correspondence necessarily the views of all white parents: at Bateman's Bay, at least, there was a major split in the Parents' and Citizens' Committee along lines of allegiance to the National and Labor Parties.1 Nevertheless, the expression of fears about present and future adult interracial sexual contact was widespread and consistent, from the tiny town of Wanaaring in 1915 to the substantial town of Yass in 1929 to the modestly-sized town of Brewarrina in 1936. So, too, was the order and progression of masking "side issues" advanced before this final one was revealed. These documents confirm Aboriginal impressions that white hostility towards them sprang from very deep sources indeed.

MECHANISMS OF CONTROL: THE RULE OF LOCAL INTERESTS

While it is seldom clear from the school segregation documents precisely which groups within the town initiated demands for exclusion, it can be assumed that the most affluent of the town and district population would not have been involved, because, except perhaps during the worst years of the Depression, their children would have been schooled in private boarding schools in Sydney. This would have been particularly so in the case of the large scale pastoralists of the north west and northern slopes, who were also the employers of the largest numbers of Mari men. The white parents most likely to be sending their children to the local public school were those members of the town's middle class who were only moderately affluent and local working class parents.

An important point which does emerge clearly from the school documents, however, is that the demands for segregation did not come exclusively from the organization most directly associated with the schools, namely the Parents' and Citizens' Associations. Just as often, the demand arose from other institutions of the town, for example the Progress Associations of Huskisson and Darlington Point, or the Municipal Councils of Moree and Brewarrina. The causes and

1 Inspector West to Chief Inspector, 7/4/1926, notes that P & C "deadlocked" over the issue. BE Fitzpatrick to Department of Education, 28/7/1925; 14/8/1925; to Department of Labour and Industry, 28/2/1926; to Minister for Justice, 22/9/1926. All correspondence in Bateman's Bay public school files, DEIL.
timing of the school segregations, as distinct from the reasons offered by white parents for the demand, cannot be understood unless the dynamics of power in country towns are analysed and the segregation attempts viewed in this context. Such an analysis exposes the mechanisms by which the unbreached wall of hostility and isolation which Aborigines remember experiencing was sustained. Municipal records of Moree and Brewarrina demonstrate such mechanisms.

On Moree Council between 1917 and 1933, only two aldermen were graziers: the influence of out-of-town employers was not a direct one. The other aldermen over this period were either professionals, solicitors, accountants and occasionally doctors or dentists, or they were businessmen, some hotel, store and garage owners but predominantly the rural entrepreneurs, stock and station agents or insurance agents. Such people probably had children attending the town public school at primary level. Many of the aldermen also held power in other town institutions. One Moree accountant, for example, was not only an alderman and sometime Mayor but was also Secretary of the Hospital Board (1923 to 1933) and of the Masonic Lodge (1924 to 1933).¹

In both Moree and Brewarrina many council aldermen were also JPs and actively participated in the administration of justice in these towns.² The power of the JPs was far greater in the interwar period than it is today: two Justices could sit on summary matters and could sentence a convicted person to as much as six months gaol without the matter being heard by a magistrate. Not only were members of all the major institutions drawn from the same class, therefore, but often the personnel of these institutions overlapped, so that many aldermen might also sit on the bench, or make decisions about the running of the hospital or of the school.

The interests of the town middle class were consistent with the maintenance of a limited population of Aborigines near the town as a supply of domestic workers and illicit sexual partners. In so far as out-of-town employers of Aborigines had an interest, their needs were serviced by an accessible source of Aboriginal labour, but that might just as easily be a camp 5 miles away from town as 500 yards. Such employers might see little need to intervene in issues relating

¹ *MMC Minutes*, 1919-1934.
² *Sands Directories*, 1917 to 1932-33.
⁴ *MMC Minutes*, 1924-1945.
directly to the precincts of the town.

The decisions made in the institutions of power within a town were not carried out by the sitting member of those institutions but either by their employees, such as Health Inspectors and other Municipal officers or by instrumentalities of the State. The latter fell into two groups: those of national area of duty and those who lived and worked largely in the town. The most important of the regional officers for the interests of this study were the Inspectors of Schools and the Child Welfare Inspectors. Being somewhat divorced from particular towns, these regional Inspectors could not be relied upon by any one town ruling class to identify with and support their particular interests, and a diversity of regional officers' views can be seen in the school segregation material, with some capitulating completely and willingly to the position of whites in specific towns, while others were able to take a more detached and balanced view.

Instruments of state power based solely within one town had less potential for a flexible and detached response to the attitudes and wishes of the town's ruling middle class. By far the most significant of this second group of State instruments was the police, although teachers were also important. Both of these groups were usually "outsiders" to the town (although invariably white) and could expect a limited time of service in any one posting. This might suggest that as individuals, police and teachers would be little influenced by the prevailing attitudes of the town's more permanent population and that they would therefore have the freedom to express divergent, and perhaps more liberal, views. In fact this was seldom the case. The approval of senior officers and of white townspeople was necessary for job security and future promotion. With the fear of the social isolation which would follow expression of dissident views, there were strong forces acting to bring newcomers into line with the dominant views of permanent town interests.¹

¹ Tennant K, Tiburon gives a clear autobiographical account of Tennant's experience of the social isolation imposed on a teacher with dissident views, as well as observations of similar pressures on police in the 1920s and 1930s. Kamien M, The Dark People of Bourke, Canberra, 1978, pp161-2 gives psychiatrist's observations of the pressures on police to enforce the view of senior police and permanent interests in a country town.
Apart from such pressures on individuals, there were wider institutional pressures on these instruments of the State, and the role of the police in particular requires greater analysis as they were the group of whites with whom the adult Aboriginal population had most contact in the town, and the police held a peculiar position of power over Aborigines. In part, this power stemmed from the relationship between the police and the Aborigines Protection Board. In fact it is difficult to decide whether the police should be regarded as agents of the Board or whether the Board itself should more properly be seen as an arm of the Police Department in view of the role of the Commissioner for Police as ex officio Chairman of the Board and the appointment of all officers of police as "Guardians" of Aborigines after the 1909 legislation. The Board always relied heavily on the police as its chronic shortage of funds did not allow it to extend the network of managers and Inspectors to the extent that it might have desired. The working relationship between the police and the managers of stations was an uneasy one as it was often unclear who held the higher authority, but certainly the manager exerted little power outside the boundaries of the station and in those areas where a station was sited close to a town, it was the police who acted as the Board's representatives in any concern off the station.

The police, as "Guardians" and more generally as representatives of the APB, held wide powers over Aborigines. As defined under the 1909 Act, "Guardians" had two antagonistic roles: the first involved distributing "relief" to Aborigines in the form of rations and clothing and protecting them "against injustice, imposition and fraud"; the second involved providing for the custody of Aboriginal children, managing and regulating Aboriginal reserves and instituting proceedings against offenders against the Act.¹ The actual investigation and prosecution of such proceedings was of course also in the hands of the police. The police as "Guardians" were, therefore, both protectors and prosecutors of Aborigines: an impossible situation in which one of these roles was clearly going to become the dominant one. The periodic instructions given to the police by the Board give a more detailed picture of the activities of the police in relation to Aborigines. Over the period from 1914 to 1934, police were asked to do the following:

¹ AP Act, 1909, S.7 and S.8.
1 Issue rations to aid Aborigines.¹
2 Reduce the ration lists by investigating all applicants and issuing rations only to "deserving" cases.²
3 Force children to attend school by withholding rations if they did not comply.³
4 Refuse rations to Aborigines in order to "persuade" them to go to another locality or to move onto an Aboriginal reserve or station.⁴
5 Decide whether or not an Aborigine was sick enough to be allowed to see a doctor. (This was a response to the increasing number of town demands for hospital segregation).⁵
6 Patrol and maintain order on unsupervised Aboriginal reserves.⁶
7 Recommend on the disposal of reserve land.⁷
8 Expel "trouble makers" from Aboriginal reserves and enforce expulsion orders issued in other areas which refused access to any reserve or station.⁸
9 Remove children from their parents and send them to the Board's "Training Homes", on the grounds that they were "neglected" or that they were 14 years of age.⁹
10 Institute proceedings against Aboriginal parents who took their children away from Aboriginal reserves or from schools in an attempt to escape the Board's decision that their children should be removed from them and "trained".¹⁰
11 Expel light-colored people from Aboriginal reserves and stop them from returning to their families still living on reserves.¹¹

¹ APBOL, No.30, October 1914; No.91, 21/9/1915; No.1101, March 1921; No.1120, 11/8/1921; No.1251, 22/4/1926.
³ Ibid, No.80, 24/7/1915.
⁴ APBM, 13/9/1922.
⁵ APBOL, No.1272, 20/10/1926.
⁶ APB Regulations, 1909-1938, Nos 7 and 8.
⁷ APBOL, No.61, 3/3/1915.
⁸ APBM, 11/7/1918, 4/12/1918; 17/4/1918.
⁹ APBOL, No.67, 1/4/1915.
APBM, 16/11/1934.
¹¹ Ibid, No.77a, 14/6/1915; No.1058, July 1920.
12 Institute proceedings to remove whole Aboriginal communities, from certain localities, under Section 14 of the Act. Aborigines vulnerable to this section included not only those receiving rations but any person with an "admixture of Aboriginal blood".¹

These instructions give some indication of the wide powers of the police over many aspects of Aborigines' lives, and it is clear from the extent and tone of the instructions that the dominant role of the police was to be "prosecutor" rather than "protector".

The role of the police as representatives of the Protection Board was only one source of their power over Aborigines. Further power derived from the normal duty of the police as part of the administration of justice in the towns. The police were employed by the State Government, yet in the course of their duty they were called on to carry out instructions from the institutions of local power such as Municipal Councils. This type of duty was often reasonably straightforward, as in those situations where police assisted with the execution of eviction and demolition orders made by the councils or where police prosecuted offenders under the Local Government Act.² In these cases, the police could be seen to be simply acting to enforce the legislation of the State.

The function of police in local affairs has, however, a far less easily defined aspect, in which the police had wider powers of initiation and discretion. This was the expectation held by those in power at both local and State levels, that the police will "keep the peace" and "maintain law and order". "Law" is not by any means a synonym for "order" and the concepts of "order" and "peace" are not objective truths which hold an identical meaning for all people or all classes. In fact, "keeping the peace" means maintaining the status quo to the satisfaction of those in power.

In a country town, it is the local ruling class, the middle class of the town and the powerful out-of-town land owners, whose views are most immediately known to the police. The role of the country-town policeman must, therefore, be to keep the peace to the satisfaction of the local ruling class, while at the same time working within the general limitations of the legislation created by his

¹ Ibid, No.90, 14/9/1915.
² APBM, 6/7/1923; 8/2/1924.
³ See M&C Minutes, 6/8/1928.
employer, the State. Where there is no specific legislation to cover an area of concern to the local ruling class, the police must use the tools they have, that is, the existing legislation, to achieve the result desired by that local ruling class. The policeman may be made aware of these desires by direct instruction or communication, or he may deduce them from his experience with and perceptions of those who hold power in the town, and so take action without any specific instruction or request for such action being made.

As a concrete example, there has never been any law which denied the freedom of the streets at any time of day to Aborigines as such and yet Aborigines remember that the police enforced curfews in numbers of country towns. The questions raised then are: Who instructed the police? and: How were the curfews maintained without a legislative base?

The Brewarrina Municipal Council has left a record of its instructions to local police to institute a curfew. While this example arose in the specific context of the town in the 1930s, there is no reason to suppose that similar but less formal instructions were not issued in earlier periods and in other towns. Brewarrina simply placed on record the mechanisms of local control. The Council wrote to the police in October, 1935, asking that:

... all the Abos congregating at night mainly between the Hall and C.W. Crane's store to be kept moving.¹

In December, the Minutes of the Council record an item headed "Aboriginals at Night" which read:

Sergeant to be written to stating clearly the position which is still unalleviated and asking if more drastic steps will be taken.²

Such "steps" were presumably taken as the issue was not raised again for two years during which the Mari population of the Board station had increased sharply, and the Council was anxious that the town camp population would also increase. In 1937, therefore, the Council wrote again to the police and as well to the Protection Board, stating:

... this council views with grave alarm the large congregation of aboriginals, mostly under the in-

1 BMC Minutes, 28/10/1935.
2 Ibid, 16/12/1935.
fluence of liquor, assembled in the streets of Brewarrina.¹

Later in the year, the Council moved:

... that the Sergeant of Police be written to
seeking co-operation in having the streets prop-
erly patrolled and that aboriginals be not
allowed to congregate in the streets.²

Soon after, the Council wrote to the Chief Secretary, requesting that
a Clerk of Petty Sessions be appointed to the town to relieve the
police of office work so that they would be free to patrol the
streets, because:

... trouble is experienced with aborigines con-
gregating in the streets ... ³

The Maris from Brewarrina and Walgett quoted earlier have
explained what "drastic steps" were open to a police force which was
not empowered by the State to enforce the curfew demanded by local
white authorities. The police used harassment and the legislative
tools which were available to them, namely the laws relating to
vagrancy, street offences and particularly drunkenness. In this way,
the local ruling class was able to second for its own purposes the
very considerable power of the State to intimidate and prosecute, via
its instruments, the police, in order to enforce a situation for
which the State had neither made legislation nor expressed an inten-
tion to legislate.

It is in this context that we must consider the widespread and
consistent statements by aboriginal people that police wrongfully
harassed and arrested Aborigines and fabricated evidence against them
to ensure conviction from JPs who were part of the ruling class of
the town. Aborigines state that although false arrests occurred on
various charges, it was the charges relating to alcohol which were
most consistently used to harass them, and Marie Reay noted that in
Walgett "drunkenness in a public place" was indeed the most common
charge against Aborigines and the most successfully prosecuted.⁴ The
high rates of arrest and conviction on this charge cannot, however,
be seen as any indication of the level of alcohol abuse in the
Aboriginal community but simply as a reflection of the fact that this

¹ Ibid, 8/3/1937.
² Ibid, 13/9/1937.
³ Ibid, 11/10/1937.
⁴ Reay, "Half-Caste Aboriginal Community", p299.
was the most effective legislative tool available to the police in their attempts to "keep the peace" to the satisfaction of local white authorities.

It was an effective tool for a number of reasons, not least because it was an easy charge on which to fabricate evidence. With no objective method of assessing the amount of alcohol consumed by a defendant, prosecution evidence depended exclusively on the arresting officer's subjective description of the defendant's condition at the time of arrest. The hearing of the charge became, therefore, simply a matter of the word of the police officer against the word of the Aboriginal defendant, a situation in which the odds were loaded heavily against the Aborigine.

There was in fact already pressure on the police from the State to fabricate evidence against Aborigines on charges of drunkenness. The same amendment to the Protection Act in 1918 which declared that Aboriginal people classified "quadroons" and "octroons" were not "Aborigines" under the Act also extended the prohibition on supply of alcohol to any person "having an admixture of Aboriginal blood"\(^1\), thus defining Aborigines of fair skin colour as Aborigines in that most public of Australian social institutions, the public bar, and placing a means of harassment in the hands of local authorities. The intention of the legislation was clearly that Aborigines should not drink, but there was no specific charge which could be laid against an Aborigine simply for drinking alcohol. Rather, Aborigines could only be charged with being "drunk", either in a "public place" under ordinary legislation or "on any Station or Reserve" under the Protection Act. As being "drunk" has always implied something different than having merely consumed a small or moderate amount of alcohol, if the police were to carry out the spirit of the legislation and stop Aborigines drinking altogether, they would have to falsify evidence to gain any conviction at all against an Aboriginal drinker. As Marie Reay noted in Walgett:

> If an aborigine is discovered with a bottle of liquor in his possession, the charge is usually drunkenness.

1 AP (Am) Act, 1918, Section 2 (iii), being an amendment to Section 9 of the principal act.
2 Reay, "Half-Caste Aboriginal Community", p300.
Aborigines were as well more accessible to the police than a European drinker, who had alternatives to "a public place" in which to drink. Their own home or the homes of friends, whether owned or rented, were private in this sense and so free from police intrusion, and even the hotel - the visibility of the white drinker and kept him off streets.

Aborigines had few such places to which they could retreat. The hotels were barred to them and the camp in which they lived was often on public land, whether travelling stock route or garbage tip, and so technically a "public place". If the camp was situated on Aboriginal reserve land, it was a retreat either, as both the land and the structure were established in the Protection Board under the 1909 Act. Even .......ings which Aborigines erected themselves on Aboriginal reserve land were the property of the Board. The police had the right to enter and patrol Aboriginal reserves and to inspect all property of the Board and, armed with the regulation prohibiting drunkenness on an Aboriginal reserve, they could arrive on the reserve at any time of the day or night and barge into any home, as Isabel Flick described earlier. If Aborigines were living in a rented house in town, their privacy even there was more theoretical than real. The police knew that with Aborigines, as with the white working class, there was little chance of retaliatory legal action if rights of privacy were violated. When the police prosecuted a charge of "drunk in a public place" following an arrest made in a place that was in fact private or only doubtfully "public", it was not difficult to falsify this aspect of police testimony, as Jack Barker has described happening in Brewarrina, where the police maintained with every arrest that it had been made in the undeniably "public" setting of the main street of town. A charge of "drunk in a public place" carried great plausibility because Aborigines lived out most of their lives "in a public place".

The Justices of the Peace who sat on such charges were likely to hold the prevailing stereotypes of Aboriginal people as highly susceptible to the effects of alcohol and also as habitually drunk, and so be more readily convinced by police evidence of drunkenness than by any Aboriginal denial. The major factor, however, acting against Aboriginal acquittal on such charges was the social and polit-

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1 AP Act, 1909, Section 8, (1) and (3).
ical role of the Justices. The Justices were members of the town's middle class, regularly associating with the police either socially, officially or in business, while their only publicly-acknowledged contact with Aborigines would be as their wife's domestic help. More importantly, the Justices were often active members of the very local authorities which were instructing police to control the movements of Aborigines.

The clearest example of such a situation comes from Brewarrina and concerns Aldermen Jeff New, JP and Michael Coleman, JP. Between the two of them, Coleman and New either moved or seconded each of the five motions of the Brewarrina Municipal Council, quoted earlier, including the one which assumed that Aborigines in the streets were "mostly under the influence of liquor", (seconded by New) and the motion calling on the police to take "more drastic steps", (moved by New).¹ Mr New in fact moved or seconded most of the motions calling for restrictions on the movement or schooling or residence of Aborigines from the time of his election to Council in 1935. The motions about "Aboriginals at night" clearly call for arrests to be made and state the necessarily subjective opinion that these Aborigines were "mostly" d-unk. After being major instigators of these motions, New and Coleman sat on the bench in judgement over Aborigines presumably arrested in consequence of the Council's call, and presumably charged with drunkenness. To say the least, Maris could expect only a prejudiced hearing from Mr New and Mr Coleman.

In a tight and indeed vicious circle, the police had been co-opted as the front line for the very local interests of the town's middle class. The laws relating to alcohol were used as a political tool to exercise control over the Aboriginal population. Evidence from later periods suggests strongly that as these laws have been changed, the police have simply used the newly available legislation to the same end: "keeping the peace" to the satisfaction of the white community.²

Such harassment made life around towns difficult and unpleasant for Aborigines, to say the least, but it could not stop them living near and attempting to gain access to the services of the town. To achieve the total removal of Aborigines from the precincts of towns,

¹ BMC Minutes, 8/3/1937; 16/12/1935.
local authorities sought further power by drawing State Government agencies into what were essentially local conflicts. To do this, however, local authorities often found they had to generate a "crisis".

THE "CRISIS" SITUATION: MOBILIZATION OF STATE POWER BY LOCAL INTERESTS

Conflict between Aborigines and white townspeople was increasing by the end of the 1910s. In the early years of that decade, there had been only three recorded disputes with towns, in each of which the Board intervened as a third party "mediator", attempting to solve the "problem" to the satisfaction of the white community. The disputes at Yass and Lismore have already been discussed, as has the total failure, evident by 1917, of the Board's efforts to remove Aborigines from both these towns. The third town was Gulargambone, where the Board attempted the Yass solution, revoking the town reserve in 1912 and forcing Maris to Burra Bee Dee station, from whence they returned reasonably soon to the town they regarded as their home. By 1919, some of these Maris were demanding entry for their children to the Gulargambone public school. White parents succeeded in gaining a second school segregation, forcing the Board to recreate the reserve in 1922 and re-establish a "special" Aboriginal school there.¹ Board member, E.B. Harkness' comment to a complaining white Lismore resident in 1917 was appropriate to all three situations: "Experience has shown that it is futile to endeavour to force the blacks to domicile themselves at any place other than that of their own choice".²

1 APBR, 1912, p1. APBM, 14/5/1919; 20/7/1922. Gulargambone public school files, 1919, DEIL.
2 EB Harkness to Mr G Nesbitt MLA, for information of Mr J Barrie, Lismore. 15/11/1917, CSIL, 17/120.
Yet in 1917 also, whites at Condobolin had begun to demand the removal of the Guris there to Euabalong or Cowra, and this demand was followed by a successful school segregation in 1920. 1 Between 1917 and 1920, there had been calls from whites at Walgett, Singleton and Brewarrina for removal of the Aboriginal population of the towns and these were followed by similar calls from Moree, Huskisson and Goolagong in 1921, from Bateman's Bay in 1922, from Darlington Point and Cowra in 1923 and from Wingham in 1924. 2 Most of these towns were the scene of bitter and protracted struggles through the 1920s as Aborigines sought to defend or establish their rights of access to the towns.

The catalyst in each town dispute was usually an actual or feared increase in the town camp population. Some of the reasons for increases in Aboriginal population around towns lay in the continuing process of intensification of land use and in the weakening of rural employment possibilities. While the State's economy had stabilized somewhat after the 1921 slump, increasing mechanization of agriculture and, to a lesser extent of pastoralism, was taking its toll. 3 Whereas one area of land worked by 61 sharefarmers near Cowra had required 700 men to take off the harvest of 1909-1910, the spread of mechanical strippers, reapers and binders and tractors meant that far fewer labourers were needed even for seasonal activities by the early 1920s in the established agricultural areas of the south west. 4 On the northern slopes, further penetration of agriculture, particularly in the Liverpool Plains area after the War, was accompanied by the overdue introduction of mechanical aids. 5

The distribution of the sheep population had also been changing: stock densities on the northern tablelands had increased at the expense of stock levels in the Western Division between 1902 and 1927. The intensity of pastoral land use on the tablelands was increasing,

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1 APBM, 24/5/1917; 21/6/1917; 13/10/1920.
3 NSW Year Book, 1928-29, pp809-821.
4 Rolls, Wild Acres, p215.
requiring more seasonal labour in the area but lowering compatibility with Aboriginal land use. The intensity of pastoral land use was reduced in the Western Division by the stock shift, but so too were labour needs.  

General unemployment in the 1920s was higher, at between 7% and 12%, than the average of 3% for the previous decade. The pastoral properties of the Walgett North area where labour was drawn from a Mari camp showed a decline in the use of this labour source, from an average on the three properties studied of 27% in the 1910s to 20% of their reduced labour force in the 1920s.

In addition to movements into town camps because of fewer available alternatives and less permanent and seasonal work prospects, the Protection Board had generated substantial population movements and the early protests against the Aboriginal presence at Yass, Brewarrina, Darlington Point, and probably Condobolin and Moree, were directly linked to either the Board's expulsion drives or to Aboriginal escape from centres of Board control to protect their children. This movement did not cease with the last Board expulsion drive of 1920", and continued most strongly in the areas where the Board's removal of children was intensifying. (See Figure 4.1)

After a decade of strenuous efforts to reduce the numbers of people resident on its reserves, the Board began to express anxiety in its 1922-23 Report that "during recent years a considerable diminution of the numbers of Aborigines residing on Aboriginal Stations and Reserves has been noticeable". In this public Report, the Board ascribed the movement to Aborigines' desire "to be free of supervision and restrictions" and their dislike of the "rules and regulations" of stations. In its internal records and circulars, however, the Board acknowledged that Aborigines were attempting "to evade having their children removed to domestic service" The locations causing

2 NSW Year Book, 1931-32, p733; 1935-36, p779.
3 Employment Records, Gingie, Dungalear and Bangate stations, op.cit.
4 APBOL, July 1920 (No.1058). No major attempts to reduce the populations of reserves and stations were made after this.
5 APBR, 1922-23, p2.
6 Ibid.
7 APBOL, 18/9/1922.
Figure 4.1

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN REMOVED TO BECOMEWARDS OF A.P.B. 1912 - 1928

A: 1912 - 1920

NORTH WEST
66 Children: 21%

NORTHERN SLOPES
71 Children: 22%

NORTH COAST
64 Children: 20%

METROPOLITAN
14 Children: 4%

SOUTH WEST
75 Children: 21%

SOUTH COAST
26 Children: 8%

TOTAL REMOVED: 321 Children

KEY
Percentage figure shows the region's proportion of the total number of children removed over each period.

B: 1921 - 1928

NORTH WEST
86 Children: 28%

NORTHERN SLOPES
129 Children: 30%

NORTH COAST
123 Children: 29%

METROPOLITAN
18 Children: 5%

SOUTH WEST
52 Children: 12%

SOUTH COAST
21 Children: 5%

TOTAL REMOVED: 428

SOURCE A.P.B.R.W.
the Board greatest concern by the early 1920s were most of the res-
erves on the north coast and the western reserves of Biewarrina,
Angledool, Pilliga, Terry Hie Hie, Gulargambone, Peak Hill, Nanima
(near Wellington) and Erannie (near Cowra). The Board's anxiety
arose in part from its fear of losing control over the children of
whom it wished to "dispose", but as well because of the increasingly
strident protests from the towns to which Aborigines from the res-
erves were moving, to set up camp on travelling stock route, or any
available vacant land.

For the first time, the Board proposed in its 1922-1923 Report
that it might require the power to confine Aborigines to reserves:
real segregation legislation. Such action was viewed by the Board as
"drastic" and as it was in stark contradiction to its commitment to
dispersal the Board decided to "watch" the situation rather than take
immediate action. The Board's Regulations were, however, amended in
1923 and again in 1924, to create the offence of refusing to obey an
order, issued under Section 14 of the Protection Act, to move away
from a specified vicinity and to set the penalty at £5. Like the
legislation concerning the supply of alcohol, this regulation was
applicable to any person of any degree of Aboriginal descent. The
original intention of Section 14 of the Act had been to effect the
removal of expelled Aborigines from the vicinity of reserves, but
"removal orders" for this purpose were signed only once after 1921.
Instead orders were issued repeatedly against Aborigines camped near
towns.

While drawing back from segregation legislation at this point,
the Board did attempt to use its existing powers in a strategy aimed
at stemming the flow of families with children off the stations and
reserves. Police and managers were instructed to threaten those pre-
paring to leave reserves or stations that their children of any age
would be removed from them if they did so. Those families who had

1 Ibid, 18/9/1922, 16/7/1923; 23/8/1923.
APBM, 13/9/1922; 18/5/1923.
2 APBR, 1922-23, p2.
3 NCG, 19/1/1923; 1/2/1924.
4 APBM, 27/4/1923. This order was made against a family near Karuah
Reserve. The earlier order (APBM, 12/1/1921) was in fact closely
connected with a town conflict as the orders were made against "un-
derisables" in the vicinity of Brungle reserve which was in the
centre of Brungle township.
already left to camp near towns were to be kept "under close surveil-
ance" and anything which would provide a justification for removing
children to a station dormitory was to be reported to the Board.¹

The reserves created in the south west had reflected European
land occupation patterns after substantial selection and alienation
had taken place, and were often associated with towns as Guris had
already been pushed off the land. In the northern slopes and table-
lands area, however, reserve creation had formalized a number of
pastoral camps of long Mari and Guri occupation, creating a pattern
of reserves scattered across the region which provided a secure
labour force for both smaller scale pastoralism and seasonally labour
intensive agriculture. This had been a reflection of a transitional
situation. As European land use in the area continued to change, so
did white attitudes to Aboriginal reserves. Intensification of land
use, white demands for land for settlement, and the introduction of
mechanization which reduced labour needs, interacted with the
decrease in population on many of these reserves and stations as
Maris tried to escape Board interference, to produce a situation
where the Board was either pressured into revocation or decided to
lease these reserves in its own financial interests.

The total area of reserve land in the State continued to fall
through this decade. (See Figure 4.2). Again the major land loss
was suffered on the north coast, but the other area to sustain a high
nett loss was the northern slopes and tablelands. (See Figure 4.3).
Sevington and Narrabri reserves, leased by 1918, were revoked by the
mid-1920s due to "loss of population". Encroachment by white lessees
had probably contributed to this process. The only reserve whose
permanence was consolidated, in that it was made a station, was
Pilliga, its population increased by Maris from Wingadee, Cuttabri and
probably elsewhere, and located in the most inhospitable area of the
whole region for white settlement.² Loss of reserve land contributed
to the dislocation of Maris in the region, and consequently to the
increase in the numbers of people in the town camps.

¹ Ibid, 13/9/1922;  25/5/1923.
APBOL, 16/7/1923;  23/8/1923.
² APBRW for Wingadee movement; Conversation with Bill Reid for
Cuttabri movement. Bill Reid was born on Cuttabri and then grew
up on Pilliga after his and other families moved to the station.
Rolls, Wild Acres, in general for selection conditions in Pilliga
area.
Figure 4.2

CHANGE IN AREA RESERVED FOR THE
USE OF ABORIGINES 1909 - 1930

[Graph showing the decline in acreage reserved for aborigines from 1909 to 1930]
NORTHERN TABLELANDS AND SLOPES
ABORIGINAL RESERVES
1914 - 1927

- Moree - Town
- Pilliga - Remaining Reserve
- L 1921 - Leased Reserve with date of leasing
- R 1921 - Revoked Reserve with date of revocation
- pL 1921 - Major Portion of Reserve Leased.

- Boggabilla R 1918
- Tumutah Station 1926
- Mungindi L 1917
- Carra R 1915
- Ashford Reserve
- Sevington R 1923
- Bassendean Station (leased only from private owner) Terminated 1927
- Oban R 1927
- Armidale R 1924
- Uralla R 1926
- Walcha pl 1925

- Ginni Reserve
- Pilliga Station
- Culumba L 1924
- Narrabri R 1920
- Wee Waa Reserve
- Bunderra R 1918
- Bann Baa R 1918
- Burra Crossing Reserve
- Gunnedah Reserve
- Culargambone Reserve 1922
- Burra Bee Dee Station
- Wattlewood Station
- Werris Creek Reserve
The course of events through the 1920s in some of the towns where economic change and Protection Board activity led to increasing town camp populations demonstrate white townspeople's responses and Aboriginal community resistance. The sources of information differ with each of the towns discussed and so perspectives are altered also. For Brewarrina, Walgett and Moree, local government records were examined. Walgett, however, formed part of a Shire, and issues of interest to one town only were seldom raised in that body's Minutes, so the town's whites have left little record. The Brewarrina and Moree Municipal Councils' Minutes are more productive sources. Oral evidence was collected in Brewarrina and Walgett but not in Moree, so a vital source has yet to be examined there. Yass and Condobolin have been used as counter examples from the south west, but neither local records nor oral evidence was collected so information has been drawn only from the Education Department and Protection Board files.

BREWARRINA: 1920 - 1927

In Brewarrina during the 1920s, as in a number of other towns, protests were made when drought, pastoral unemployment and Protection Board activity led to an increase in the town's Mari population. In 1920, the Hospital Board called for segregation of the hospital at Government expense\(^1\), while the Municipal Council demanded the removal of all Aborigines "from the precincts of the town".\(^2\) The Protection Board rejected the request for funds to build a separate hospital ward for Aborigines, arguing that the Government already provided a subsidy for the care of any "destitute" patients. This resulted merely in a continuation of the existing de facto segregation whereby Mari patients were accommodated on the hospital's open verandahs. The Board did, however, respond to the Council's call by issuing removal orders against the town Maris, who refused to obey them. There appears to have been little further increase in the camp population in the early and mid-1920s and so the Council did not become any more alarmed. The Mari enrolments at the public school remained constant at 25% of the school's pupils and no formal complaints were

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1 APBM, 14/7/1920.
2 Ibid, 1/9/1920.
made. A stability of sorts was achieved by the day-to-day repressive measures, described earlier, which apparently allayed white concern. It was only when the town camp population increased again with another drought and the onset of rural unemployment in 1927 that Council renewed its protests about "the housing conditions of the blacks", alleging that TB was prevalent in the camps.

WALGETT: 1917 - 1927

Walgett had a more eventful decade. The public school was segregated in 1917 but so little Education Department investigation was conducted that it is difficult to identify the specific causes, other than the fact that Mari enrolment had reached 12 children. The town camp population at the Namoi bend had probably been increased because of changes in land use to the east and the search for education of Maris working on pastoral stations. Five of the Mari children at the school were, in fact, from Gingie pastoral camp and had been walking six miles into school each day.

Once the segregation had been achieved, on the grounds that Mari children were too "dirty" to be educated with white children, white parents passed on to the public school teacher their opinion that the excluded children deserved an education and so should be removed to some place where they could obtain it. The teacher and the Regional Inspector of Schools acted as effective channels for this opinion and the Education Department took up the argument. The Protection Board, however, had just had its fingers badly burned with the Yass and Gulargambone attempts to move whole communities, and was reluctant to take any action. At this stage it argued for the readmission of the

1 Inspector HN Barlex (formerly a teacher at Brewarrina public school) to Chief Inspector, 7/8/1923. Walgett public school files, DEIL.
2 BMC Minutes, 24/1/1927; 2/12/1929.
3 Walgett public school files, 1917, DEIL.
4 T King (Teacher) to H Clemens, Regional Inspector, 13/4/1917, Walgett public school files, DEIL.
Mari children, as their fathers were "industrious", their mothers "of excellent character" and the children themselves "healthy". Furthermore, the Board stated that:

... it would be practically impossible to move them to any other camp as it would be contrary to Aboriginal habits.¹

The 5 school children from Gingie pastoral camp became, however, the victims of this town pressure. The Board, wishing to appear to be taking some action, authorized the children's removal to its "Training Homes".² Mari parental opposition to these removals was intense. As the children were forced onto the train at Walgett by the police, one father, George Driver, jumped in front of the train, his hands against the engine and his feet braced against the sleepers, in a last attempt to stop the train moving off. He was dragged away and the train, with his daughter Ruby, left for Sydney. Ruby Driver died in Sydney in 1922, after 5 years of "service", without having seen her family again.³

The Education Department persisted in calling for the removal of the remaining seven children from the town camp, either alone or with their families. After discussions with townspeople, the Regional Inspector proposed that the Mari be transferred to Angledool station, arguing that this would make little difference to their lifestyles. The surrounding pastoral stations would, he assumed, provide work while for those Mari like the Nicholls' who lived by selling fish caught in the Walgett rivers, "there are plenty of fish in the Narran" at Angledool.⁴

The Board sustained its refusal to take further action and the missionaries set up their bag-hut school in the Namoi bend. After 1917, the camp population appears to have been increased by Wailwan- and Ngiyamba-speaking Mari from Wingadee and other areas to the south and east. Walgett town was located on land of significance to speakers of both these closely-related languages, while the missionary school in the Namoi bend offered an educational alternative to

1 APB to Undersecretary, Department of Education, 5/10/1917. Walgett public school files, DEIL.
2 H Clemens to Chief Inspector, 5/12/1917, Walgett public school files, DEIL.
3 Interview T41. APBRW, No.114.
4 H Clemens to Chief Inspector, 5/12/1917, op.cit.
the "special" school and the managerial control of Pilliga station. By the early 1920s, at least 14 children were attending the Namoi bend school and were eager enough for education to buy their own texts and materials. Lessons were irregular, however, and their standard clearly inferior to that of the public school. In 1923 some Maris attempted to re-enter the public school. It is not possible to assess the level of coordination in this attempt but undoubtedly all Maris were watching closely as one family enlisted the support of the local ALP branch and the AWU in their campaign for readmission.

With a segregation in effect, however, white parents refused to consider re-entry, conscious that if they acquiesced in the admission of one family there were by then nearly 30 Mari children of school age likely to seek admission also. They now told the school's teacher that it had been the morals of the Mari children which had necessitated the earlier segregation and indicated that they would withdraw their own children from the school if any Maris were admitted.

This incident revealed the dangers to which Maris exposed themselves in attempts to break into a white town's services. Following the line suggested by the townspeople, the Regional Inspector investigated not the educational needs of this Mari family but rather its "morals", and, having found a de facto rather than a legal marriage he called on the Protection Board to remedy the "neglect" of the children, presumably by removal.

The Protection Board had the police canvass each Mari family, suggesting that they be moved to either Angledool or Pilliga station, "at Government expense". The answer was a unanimous and adamant refusal: Maris explained that they had no wish to live under Board control and that there was no work for newcomers around either of

1 Inspector HN Barlex to Chief Inspector, 7/8/1923, Walgett public school files, DEIL.
2 Interview T41.
3 Secretary, Australian Workers' Union, to Director of Education, 28/6/1923, enclosing letter from Walgett branch of ALP. Walgett public school files, DEIL.
4 H Tindall (Headmaster) to Regional Inspector Barlex, 28/7/1923.
5 HN Barlex to H Tindall, 23/7/1923.
Undersecretary, Department of Education to APB, 23/8/1923.
Walgett public school files, DEIL.
these places, "while there is more or less permanent work to be had near Walgett". The Board resorted to having the police inform Marri parents that their children would be summarily removed, under Section 13 of the Protection Act, to Angledool dormitories: they could come too if they wished.

Arthur Dodd has explained the ensuing move:

No kids went to school at Walgett, that's why they hunted us all out. They took their kids and they had to follow their kids then.

The missionary described the action as a "forced removal", commenting on "how hard it was" to see the unwilling children and women bundled onto the mail trucks used to transport them. The Maris interviewed who were involved have recalled weeping people trying to gather a few belongings while the local police hurried them along.

Twenty-one children were removed and in all about 60 Maris were forced to "follow their children" to Angledool. Only the Nicholls family remained in the Namoi bend. Some Walgett Maris were still at Angledool when this station was in turn moved to Brewarrina in 1936.

Ivy Green has commented on these moves:

Drivin' em here and drivin' em there like sheep. Puttin' em in one paddock and then when one paddock got eat out, puttin' em in another paddock, like sheep ...

Most of the Walgett Maris moved in 1923, however, came back to Walgett in less than a year, "walked back, carryin' their swag, womens and kids and everything", defying the Board and the town.

By 1925, with the number of Maris in the Namoi bend as high as it had been in 1923, there was another "move on foot to remove them altogether from the district", according to the missionary who was still teaching in the bag-hut school. As there is no record of Protection Board or Education Department initiation, this "move" was a direct reflection of white townspeople's attitudes. A compromise

1 HN Barley to Chief Inspector, 7/8/1923. Walgett public school files, DEIL.
2 Interviews T35, T36, T37, T39, T41, T45.
3 Interview T39.
4 Our Aim, V.XVII, 4, 20/12/1923, p10.
5 Ibid.
6 Interview T37.
7 Interviews T36, T37, T41, T45.
8 Our Aim, V.XXI, 6, 23/2/1928, p4.
solution was proposed by the missionary, who suggested the disused reserve excised from Gingie pastoral property as an alternative residential site. The Board approved the suggestion and so the town Maris, and the bag-hut school, were packed off to what became known as Gingie reserve, 6 miles out of town.\(^1\) Again it was an unwilling move. All the Walgett Maris interviewed saw the Protection Board as having collaborated with the town's whites, who were nevertheless perceived as the motivating force. Don Nicholls stated:

They hunted'em out from here. They wouldn't have been out there at Gingie at all only for them white fellas hunted'em out.\(^2\)

Eventually, some Maris from the Gingie pastoral camp moved onto the reserve to gain access to the school. For other Maris, however, the reserve was unsatisfactory and they moved back into the Namoi bend camp site.\(^3\) By 1927, two families had gained entry to the public school and other Maris were expressing anger that they were still being excluded.\(^4\) The Board itself now called for the total segregation of the public school, to settle the disquiet and to stem the movement back into town.\(^5\) The teacher refused to exclude these children, gaining Education Department support for his argument that no specific objections had yet been raised against them.\(^6\) This uneasy situation continued through the Depression years, but the stage was set for further attempts by Maris to enter the school and by townspeople to force all Maris out onto Gingie again in the late 1930s.

The school segregation at Walgett, while it lasted, had proved an effective mechanism for drawing the State into a local conflict and for achieving at least temporary compliance with white townspeople's wishes. Maris had been caused enormous dislocation and stress but they had remained persistent and to some extent successful in staying in the town of their choice.

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1 APBM, 19/6/1925.
2 Interview T41.
3 Interviews T41, T45.
4 Regional Inspector to Chief Inspector, 10/11/1928. Walgett public school files, DEIL.
5 APB to Undersecretary, Department of Education, 10/10/1928. Walgett public school files, DEIL.
6 Regional Inspector to Chief Inspector, 10/11/1928, op.cit.
CONDOBOLIN: 1917 - 1929

At Condobolin, white transpeople gained even less than those at Walgett. Demands for removal of the town's Guri population had begun in 1917, when the request was made to the Education Department.¹ The Protection Board "deferred" action but Condobolin Council raised the issue again the following year.² Donaldson, investigating for the Board, found that the Guris refused to move to either Euabalong or Cowra and he recommended the creation of a new reserve outside Municipal boundaries.³ Guris apparently refused to move to this site also and the Board decided to compromise by renovating the huts on the old reserve, for which it required routine Council approval."⁴ The Council refused to approve the renovation plans, appealing instead to the Education Department which, more compliant than the Board, agreed to segregate the school.⁵

The Board was not able to fund a "special" school on the reserve for 5 years. When this school opened, in January 1926, it was seen by the town as a validation of the Guri presence and the Council renewed its call for the total removal of the community.⁶ The Board acceded to the extent of issuing removal orders but Guris refused to move. With this confirming the recent Walgett experience, Donaldson was sent to Condobolin to explain:

... the utter impossibility of compelling the Aborigines to remove to and live on another site, mentioning other previous instances where they have refused to do so and the bad consequences which followed.⁷

The Council was unmoved and so the Board itself retreated, issuing further removal orders.⁸ There is no record of prosecutions for failure to obey these orders but as the fine for such a refusal had been notified only two years earlier and as Guris yet again refused to move, there were probably some court actions.

1 APBM, 24/5/1917.
2 Ibid, 21/6/1917; 4/2/1918.
3 Ibid, 5/2/1919.
5 Ibid, 13/10/1920.
6 Ibid, 14/5/1926.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid, 9/7/1926.
In the face of this total Guri intransigence, the Board finally admitted defeat on this front, and began preparations to renovate the huts on the existing reserve to comply with Local Government Regulations.¹ This was not, however, the object of Condobolin Council: it did not want Aborigines living in the town under any conditions. The Board now threatened to revoke the reserve altogether, thus ending its responsibilities but still the Council persisted in its demand for removal. After taking legal advice, the Board decided to go ahead with the renovations without further reference to the Council.² Donaldson was again sent to the town, this time with instructions to "suggest" to Council "that the Aborigines have certain rights".³

Although still barred from the school, Gurs had won some security of residence in the town. The Council had not, however, given up altogether. In what appeared, at first, an entirely unrelated incident two years later, the Condobolin Rugby League football club forfeited a match rather than play the Guri "Boomerangs" side from the reserve, proposing that the "Boomerang Club" be suspended from membership of the Competition Group on the grounds that TB was "prevalent" on the reserve. The action was unwise, bringing adverse publicity and derision from other competition teams in towns like Forbes which were not at that time facing Aboriginal demands for access.⁴ The Condobolin football team was not acting in isolation: sport as usual reflected politics. The white team's demand was defended by a trip to Sydney for that specific purpose by none other than the Mayor of Condobolin Municipality and the President of the Condobolin Farmers' and Settlers' Association. The aim of the exercise had been to renew the call for removal of the Guri population but it succeeded only to the extent that the Protection Board agreed to a Health Department inspection of the reserve.⁵

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¹ Ibid, 27/8/1926.
² Ibid, 15/10/1926; 3/12/1926; 4/2/1927.
³ Ibid, 3/12/1926.
⁴ SMH, 19/6/1929; 27/6/1929.
⁵ Ibid, 3/7/1929.
YASS: 1920 - 1930

Townspeople at Yass had been attempting to remove Guris from the town for many years but the danger to Aborigines of community assertion was again highlighted by events there in 1920. White protests had been reactivated as Guris re-entered the town camps after the collapse of Edgerton station in 1917. The Protection Board refused to accept responsibility itself as those involved were "of light caste", but called in the Child Welfare Department in 1920 to "deal with" the children in the camp.¹

Guris at Yass, however, quite clearly identified themselves as Aboriginal and the town's authorities identified them as Aboriginal too. In 1925 the Council called again for the removal of the camp on the grounds that it was located on the water catchment area and "disease" was present among the inhabitants.² The Board still refused to accept responsibility for people it said were not "Aborigines", but further Council protests saw the Board conceding. It began to search for an alternative camp site which could be made a reserve, over which some control could then be exerted.³ Local land owners refused to sell for this purpose and the area's Land Board could (would?) only offer a disused nightsoil depot, which the Protection Board declined after advice from the Health Department.⁴

Town pressure continued until 1927, when the Council stated explicitly its demand that all Guris be removed to Brungle station⁵, 72 miles away. The Board made attempts to carry out this "suggestion", forcing a few Yass families to Brungle only to find that they returned to Yass within a short time.⁶ The remaining Guris gained some publicity through the local missionary, who noted that support for the maintenance of an Aboriginal presence had come from the white women who employed Guris as domestic workers. There was, then, some dissention among the town's whites.⁷

1 APBM, 1/9/1920; 13/10/1920.
2 Ibid, 19/6/1925.
3 Ibid, 22/1/1926; 14/5/1926.
5 Ibid, 13/5/1927.
6 Ibid. Our Aim, V.XXI, 7, 23/3/1928, p9; V.XXII, 6, 26/2/1929, p8.
7 SMH, 24/5/1927.
As the greater proportion of the Guri community had stayed in Yass, the Council accelerated its campaign for their removal with a deputation to the Chief Secretary in mid-1928. The Board eventually acquired a reserve site in May 1929, by which time the Council was pressing the "urgency of the matter"², probably because Guris had succeeded in breaking the school segregation.

In April 1929, the Bell family gained admission for their three children after representations which had begun in February and were based on the inadequacy of the convent's instruction.³ Then, exactly as white parents in Yass and other towns like Walgett feared, more Guris applied for enrolment. Within 6 weeks, 9 more children from the camps, all "well-behaved" and "in a clean condition" had been admitted by the Headmaster.⁴ As still more were expected to seek enrolment, a unanimous vote of the Parents' and Citizens' Association overrode the Headmaster's assurances on the behaviour and hygiene of the children and demanded that he inform the Education Department that white children would be withdrawn from the school unless the Aborigines were excluded.⁵ Calls for the "urgent" and total removal of the camp were renewed with accusations that it harboured TB, VD and "immorality".⁶ The Guri children were excluded in July and the Board agreed to establish a school on the new reserve site.⁷

As had happened at Walgett, white parents now expressed "concern" and "anxiety" that the Guri children were not receiving an education, insisting that a teacher be installed quickly at the new "special" school.⁸ Mrs Bertha Bell, mother of the children who had first broken

1 APBM, 27/7/1928.
2 Ibid, 1/2/1929; 10/5/1929.
3 Acting Chief Inspector to HM Brigden, Headmaster, 2/4/1929. Yass public school files, DEIL.
4 HM Brigden to Chief Inspector, 28/6/1929. Yass public school files, DEIL.
5 Yass newspaper article cited above, "Black and White", 24/6/1929. Yass public school files, DEIL.
6 Ibid.
7 Letters to Minister of Education from: Municipal Council (29/6/1929); Yass Parents' and Citizens' Association (26/6/1929); The Rector, St Clement's Church (18/6/1929): the parents of four children (white) threatening withdrawal (22/6/1929).
the segregation, protested on behalf of all the parents that their children were clean, healthy and, above all, that:

The Public School is free to the Dark children as well as the White.¹

The segregation was carried out and in fact made absolute, with the exclusion of a child who, although fair, was of Aboriginal descent and had attended the public school in previous years. Mrs Bell was informed that she must send her children to the "special" school, despite the fact that no teacher was appointed until January 1930.² After a long attempt to avoid taking a role at Yass, the Protection Board had been drawn in, acting and being seen to act to satisfy not Aboriginal demands but those of white townspeople.

MOREE: 1921 - 1934

At Moree, one of the recurrent themes of the Municipal Council's Minutes was its determination to maintain the segregation of the town's artesian baths. These hot springs were not only a tourist attraction but provided an important hygiene resource for the poorer members of the white community, most of whom lived near the baths in East Moree.³ Most Maris were also living in this area, camped on Travelling Stock Route to the east of the baths, and just as much in need of the baths for domestic hygiene as were the poorer whites. Yet throughout the period under discussion Moree Municipal Council refused Aborigines admission to the baths, on the grounds that they were "not desirable" and "were likely to have an ill effect on the attendance at the Baths".⁴ Although "contagious diseases" were mentioned at one stage⁵, the criterion for exclusion was race, the relevant motion reading:

¹ Mrs Bertha Bell to Department of Education, 9/10/1929. Yass public school files, DEIL.
² Chief Inspector to HN Brigden, 2/9/1929. APB to Undersecretary, Department of Education, 4/10/1929. Director of Education to JM Tully MLA, for information of Mrs Bertha Bell, 28/10/1929. All in Yass public school files, DEIL.
³ Reay, "Class and Status", p179.
⁴ MMG Minutes, 5/5/1921.
⁵ Ibid, 11/7/1927.
That persons appearing to have aboriginal blood be excluded from the baths.¹

The Council recognised the importance of the baths as a hygiene resource to Aborigines and often noted its intention to build separate showers "for the coloured people".² Unfortunately for Moree's Aborigines, it took two years for Council to get around to calling tenders for these showers³, and there is absolutely no record of them ever having been built.

The exclusion from the baths had symbolic significance for Maris, but of far greater effect was the Council's consistent attempt to remove Maris from their preferred camp site close to the town. The numbers in the camp had been increased by the early 1920s by Maris either expelled from Terry Hie Hie or escaping the Board's "apprenticeship" removals there.⁴ Moree provided an attractive focus of migration for two reasons: it was within the Gamilarai language area of Terry Hie Hie Maris and the public school was not segregated. Council began trying to move them away in 1921, instructing the police to clear all Aboriginal campers from the Municipality. The Protection Board was consulted and agreed to issue removal orders, intended to force Maris back to Terry Hie Hie.⁵ These orders were no more successful than in other areas and in February 1922, the Council was again complaining about the standards of Maris housing.⁶ In November Council once more requested Protection Board assistance because of "the undesirability of allowing the Aborigines to camp within the Municipal boundaries".⁷

Removal orders were again issued and the Board invited Council to prosecute Aborigines for disregarding them.⁸ As no date was specified on these orders, Council was unable to act immediately but it did expand on what it wanted done with the camp residents once they were removed. It did not want them out of the area altogether,

¹ Ibid, 15/6/1925; Reaffirmed 8/3/1926 and 18/8/1930.
³ Ibid, from 15/6/1925 to 30/5/1927.
⁴ The families listed as expelled (APBOL, 7/1/1915) are among those recorded in the Council's Minutes as being prosecuted for failing to move, 1928.
⁵ APBM, 2/2/1921; MMC Minutes, 10/2/1921.
⁶ MMC Minutes, 9/2/1922.
⁷ Ibid, 13/11/1922.
⁸ APBM, 18/1/1923.
it maintained, but suggested that the Board establish a reserve "about 4 or 5 miles from the town boundaries", so that the Aborigines would be able to "follow their usual occupations".\textsuperscript{1} In other words, the Council wanted to ensure the continuation of the labour source provided by the Aboriginal community. The Board refused to consider the establishment of a new reserve and insisted that the Aborigines should be moved to one of the Board's existing stations.\textsuperscript{2}

By early 1924, however, the Board had become even more anxious about the movement of Maris away from Terry Hie Hie. The station's manager visited the Moree Council to enlist their support in forcing new arrivals to return to the mission, but the Council reiterated that it did not wish to remove Maris altogether from the area.\textsuperscript{3} In April, however, after further Board pressure, the Council agreed to make another formal application for removal orders.\textsuperscript{4} Once again Maris refused to obey. Late in 1924 the Board conceded defeat in its attempts to confine the Terry Hie Hie residents: the station's manager was withdrawn and most of the reserve land leased.\textsuperscript{5} With land use in the area intensifying rapidly, there were now few places to which Maris could be expected to go if they did leave Moree and there were no reserves closer than Collarenebri or Euraba, both about 80 miles away.

Moree Council continued to complain through 1925 of the "nuisance" created by the camps, some of which were now on private land near the rubbish tip at East Moree.\textsuperscript{6} Although Council wanted Maris out of sight, it was prepared to utilize their services where convenient and something of the Council's attitude is reflected in the suggestion by the Health Inspector:

... that it was necessary to have a man at the Garbage Tip and recommending the employment of a nigger for same.\textsuperscript{7}

The Council became really anxious in 1927, when the town camp, containing not only its original residents but most of the Terry Hie

\textsuperscript{1} MMC Minutes, 11/4/1923; 14/5/1923.
\textsuperscript{2} APBM, 6/7/1923.
\textsuperscript{3} MMC Minutes, 11/2/1924; 10/3/1924.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, 28/4/1924.
\textsuperscript{5} APBM, 22/5/1924.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid, 22/2/1926.
\textsuperscript{7} MMC Minutes, 24/8/1925.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid, 22/2/1926.
Hie population, was further increased by the onset of rural unemploy-
ment. The Protection Board suggested the creation of a reserve, on
a site two miles from the town, which would allow control over living
conditions.¹ Moree Council was appalled: it had wanted Maris to be
within reach of employers but not so close as to be visible. The
Board was informed:

... that Council strongly opposes the suggestion
and is not favourable to any area within the
Municipality being set aside for the purposes of
a Black's Reserve ... ²

As the Board had failed to achieve any satisfactory "solution",
the Council now decided that it would act to remove the camps. The
Board was informed but took no role.³ The Council launched its cam-
paign in May 1928. Nothing even remotely like the scale of this
operation is recorded elsewhere in the Council's Minutes from 1919 to
1934.

In its first step, the Council served closing orders on 50 Mari
households, declaring their dwellings to be "unfit for human habita-
tion". The local missionary, a Mr Haines, was strongly sympathetic
to the Mari community, noting that the camps needed to be located
close to town because so many of the Mari women were employed as dom-
estics in white households and all of the children were attending the
public school. Haines could not believe that the police would par-
ticipate in the evictions and demolitions the Council were ordering.⁵
The police were prepared to participate and served the eviction
notices. Maris refused to obey these orders to quit. The police
duly issued the summonses for failure to comply, prosecutions were
undertaken and convictions recorded against all the Mari
householders.⁶

A delegation including missionary Haines and one sympathetic
alderman put the Mari case before the Governor of NSW when he
attended a function in Moree in July. There was no favourable

¹ APBM, 4/2/1927.
² MMC Minutes, 7/3/1927.
⁴ Ibid, 28/5/1928.
⁵ Our Aim, V.XXI, 9, 22/5/1928, p10.
response. Council now began demolitions of Mari homes. Maris who had been fined for failure to comply with Council orders refused to pay the fines and in August and September warrants were issued for their arrest. Maris achieved a stay of both demolitions and arrests by seeking to put their own case before Council in its October meeting. Predictably, the majority of aldermen were unmoved by Mari arguments: the demolitions began again, more prosecutions took place and Maris who refused to pay fines were gaoled in November and December 1928 and January 1929. One town merchant was prepared to pay some of the fines, such as those for two elderly women who were gaoled for refusal to pay. Maris still refused to move: as homes were demolished new camps were built to take their place.

A new Council took office in January 1929, and Haines believed it would be more sympathetic. Again he was too optimistic. The incoming Council continued with the demolitions into February. By this time it was clear that the Council tactics were failing, despite 7 months of prosecutions, demolitions and gaolings. Facing this fact in April 1929, the Council finally conceded that an Aboriginal reserve should be established within the Municipal boundaries, on the Common at East Moree. The proposed reserve was some distance further away from town than the current camp but much closer than that 4 or 5 miles distant which the Council had originally proposed. The Council suggested 5 acres for the reserve but grudgingly accepted the Board argument that twelve acres was the minimum necessary for a population which may have approached two hundred.

All this had been arranged between the Council and the Board without consulting or informing Maris. As the demolitions had ceased

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1 Ibid, V.XXI, 12, 23/8/1928, p2.
3 Ibid, 29/10/1928.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid, 12/11/1928; 10/12/1928; Our Aim, V.XXII, 5, 26/1/1929.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 MMC Minutes, 7/1/1929; 21/1/1929; 18/2/1929.
10 Ibid, 10/6/1929; 24/6/1929.
Aboriginal Census Returns, Moree Police Patrol, 1931.
in March, Maris assumed that they had won secure residence on their original camp site.¹ The procedures for notification of the reserve were lengthy and no further action was taken by Council through 1929, as it waited for the Board to complete these arrangements. By February 1930, however, the Council was anxiously calling on the Board to expedite "the removing of the blacks from the present site".²

The formal notification of the reserve took place in August 1930, yet the Board still took no effective action to transfer the Maris from camp to reserve.³ Council wrote again to the Board in March 1931, demanding that it carry out the removal but the Council had left the matter too late. The Board was by this time caught up in the effects of the Depression and found it impossible to obtain funds to build houses or any other facilities on the new reserve.⁴ The Health Department suggested that camp site be made a reserve, but Council emphatically rejected the proposal, insisting that the more distant reserve was the only location within the Municipality on which Maris were able to live.⁵

Although the Council had conceded that Maris were to live within the Municipality, it made certain they did not have the chance to exercise any formal political rights there. When drawing up new electoral lists in May 1931, Council specified that residents of "the Blacks' Camp" were to be excluded.⁶

With the issue of a residential site apparently deadlocked, the Council acted aggressively. Using the excuse of a Health Department report on the conditions at the camp, the Council called for the exclusion of Aboriginal children from the Moree public school and for the provision of additional accommodation at the Hospital to allow for the more effective segregation of Aboriginal patients.⁷ The school exclusion was carried out in May 1933 and the Council then used this to try to force the hand of the Protection Board. Council

1  Our Aim, V.XXII, 11, 22/7/1929. 
2  MMC Minutes, 30/2/1930.
3  Ibid, 18/8/1930.
   APBM, 12/5/1932, 14/10/1932, 9/3/1933, 21/7/1933.
5  MMC Minutes, 5/12/1932, 16/1/1933.
7  Ibid, 5/12/1932.
asked that the Aboriginal children be readmitted to the public school on a temporary basis only until alternative arrangements could be made. Council then made "urgent representations" to the Board:

advising of the exclusion of 21 children and asking for immediate arrangements to be made for their schooling.¹

The injection of this urgency into the situation had the desired effect: within a fortnight, the Board was advising Council that tenders for a school for the Aboriginal children were being procured.² The only land available to the Board for such a school was the as yet unused reserve, which was, as Haines observed, "a long way from the principal camp".³ Exclusion of the children from the public school and the erection of a "special" Aboriginal school on the reserve meant greater pressure on Mari families to move from the town camp to the reserve, where Council wanted them.

The new school itself would hardly have been an attraction had Maris not been excluded from the public school. The one room building was completed in late 1933, after the inadequate ventilation had been improved at the insistence of the Council.⁴ The water supply was also considered by the Council to be inadequate but this was not rectified.⁵ The school did not have blinds or any washbasins. The most noticeable difference to be seen at this "special" school, however, was that for some months after the Aboriginal children had been compelled to attend, there was no furniture in the building. The Council sent an "urgent" letter to the Protection Board, saying, with some understatement:

It is understood that the school is bare of any furniture or seats, which state of affairs is considered unnecessary.⁶

Not surprisingly, Maris were angered by the public school segregation and 6 families protested by refusing to allow their children

¹ Ibid, 6/6/1933.
² Ibid, 19/6/1933.
³ Our Aim, V.XXVIII, 7, 24/3/1934.
⁴ MMC Minutes, 9/10/1933.
⁵ Ibid, 9/10/1933, 12/2/1934.
⁶ Town Clerk, MMC to Minister for Education, 15/3/1924. Moree public school files, DEIL.
to attend the reserve school.\textsuperscript{1} When white parents staged or threatened such protests, as they had done at Walgett, Yass and Bateman's Bay during the 1920s, the Education Department response was, at the least, an enquiry and usually concession to white demand for segregation. For these Mari parents at Moree the response was quite different. A Child Welfare Department official was sent to threaten the parents with removal of their children.\textsuperscript{2} Knowing, like all Aboriginal parents, that their children were vulnerable, they had no choice but to concede.

This Inspector's report revealed an attempt to convince Mari that they had not accurately understood what was happening but were instead suffering some form of paranoid delusion:

When I visited the school in March last and also called on several Aboriginal families, I found that the local Aborigines had the idea that an invidious distinction was being made against them, on account of racial prejudice, by the provision of a separate school.

I endeavoured to remove this idea, and inculcate the feeling that a benefit had been conferred by the institution of a special school intended to meet the requirements of their own race and to help their children in their own particular problems.\textsuperscript{3}

The "benefits" of an isolated school which, at the time of the Inspector's visit, didn't even have furniture, could hardly be expected to evoke much gratitude from Mari who had been struggling for over ten years to assert their rights to live in town at least partly so that their children could have access to education.

In spite of this pressure, only some Mari moved onto the new reserve. The hardships of the struggle in fact increased the determination of Mari in Moree to resist further attempts to move them out of town, as Marie Reay observed in the mid-1940s. At what had by then become known as the Top Camp, she wrote:

\textsuperscript{1} M Kinear, Teacher, Aboriginal School, Moree, to CC Chambers, Inspector, Department of Education, 26/2/1934. Moree public school files, DEIL.

\textsuperscript{2} GR Thomas, Undersecretary, Department of Education to Undersecretary, Child Welfare Department, 23/4/1934. Moree public school files, DEIL.

\textsuperscript{3} Child Welfare Department Inspector's Report (unsigned) to Department of Education, 27/9/1934.
Many of the inhabitants are descendants of mixed-bloods who were gaol held some years ago for refusing to comply with an order to move from this site, and consequently the site has an emotional value for the present occupants. This gives the local "roup a common tradition and solidarity which fii. expression whenever efforts are made by white townspeople to have this camp removed.1

It had been only the consistent Mari refusal to move, in the face of demolitions and goolings, which had saved the community members being sent back to Board control on Terry Hie Hie before 1924 or to some place at least 4 miles out of town after 1924. The Council only conceded that an Aboriginal reserve should be established closer to town because it had failed in all other attempts to move Maris. Council would in fact, have failed to move any Maris at all if it had not also initiated the exclusion of Aboriginal children from the school and then been able to use this to force the Board to carry out its plans to establish an Aboriginal reserve with some facilities. The school exclusion should therefore only be seen in the context of the long continued battle by the Council to move Maris out of town. Denying access to the public school for Mari children was as much a weapon for the Council's purposes as the prosecutions or the demolitions.

Moree provides a clear example of the coordinated use of white institutions against Aborigines. With the initiating force being the Council, the institutions of the courts, the school and the hospital were used in a partially successful attempt to restrict the residential area available to Aborigines. The police were used to carry out Council decisions, the Board was manipulated to achieve the ends desired by Council and the Child Welfare Department, with all its attendant threats, was called in to crush opposition and enforce Mari compliance. Only the continued resistance of the Mari community won compromises or concessions.

All of these examples, despite their individual variations, show certain common aspects, and the common thread running through each is conflict of interests. There was, firstly, widespread conflict

1 Reay, "Class and Status", p182.
between Aborigines and whites at a local level. Aboriginal demands, whether documented or demonstrated by their actions, were quite clear. They wanted security of residence in the town of their choice, a choice which related to both traditional and contemporary considerations, and they wanted access to the services of that town on the same basis as white residents. One aspect of this conflict which is not clear from these examples of towns in the 1920s is the relationship between a period of open confrontation and the degree of violence Aborigines were likely to meet on the streets during that time. The activity of Brewarrina's vigilante gangs was, however, quite clearly accelerated during that town's conflict period in the mid-1930s¹, and it is probable that the same thing occurred in other towns in periods of heightened tension.

Excluding Brewarrina, the towns described during the 1920s consistently tried to draw State Departments or agencies into what were essentially local conflicts by manipulating the town's institutions. While Condobolin went so far as to use a football team and hospitals were also used, most towns found that the public school presented the most effective mechanism for involving the State. This issue was so effective in the 1920s because of fundamental conflicts in the policies of the Department of Education and the Protection Board. The Department was prepared to exclude Aboriginal children routinely on any complaint by white townspeople, and only then to insist that the Board provide some alternative. As Jim Fletcher has pointed out and as is clear from the Yass situation, the Head Office of the Department was prepared to override both its own guidelines (for criteria for temporary exclusion on grounds of health or behaviour as they applied to white children) and the occasional contrary advice of its teachers and Regional Inspectors in the issue of Aboriginal access to its schools.²

The Protection Board, on the other hand, was in general trying to secure the entry of Aborigines into public schools. It had, since the 1890s, consistently protested at segregations, but with a firm policy of encouraging "mergence" in the 1910s and 1920s, its desire for Aboriginal access to public schools was even stronger. Yet there was a basic conflict of interest between the Protection Board and

¹ Interviews T22, T24, T50, T18, T5.
white townspeople. As the Board expelled people from its reserves and stations so they could "merge" into the general community, the numbers of people in town camps increased above the level required for town domestic labour and clandestine sexual exploitation, and town protests escalated. The Board found itself at Brewarrina and Moree, for example, issuing removal orders against Maris in the town camp as "persons with an admixture of Aboriginal blood" when some of these same Maris had been only recently expelled from the area's station as not being "Aborigines" within the meaning of the Act.

The Board, over the decade, was drawn deeper and deeper into the logic of white townspeople's demands even though these were usually in direct contradiction to the Board's often-stated policy. It showed at times extreme reluctance to act, notably at Yass and at Walgett (from 1917 to 1923), but in both these situations the Board ended by doing and being seen by Aborigines to do, precisely what white town authorities wanted. At Walgett, the Board reached the point where, ten years after it had opposed segregation, it was itself demanding that the town school be totally segregated. As it had done in the creation of many reserves in the 1883 to 1909 period, the Board was responsive to local white pressure. It was expected by local white townspeople to be a body to protect, not Aboriginal interests, but white interests and the Board usually fulfilled this expectation.

Victories in these towns on the issue of security of residence for Aborigines were only won because of prolonged and effective Aboriginal resistance. Even at Condobolin, where the Board conceded to Guri demands on this issue and also made its sole documented statement of the decade to the effect that Aborigines "had certain rights", it did so only after a series of removal orders, possibly with resulting prosecutions. Condobolin Guris could not have seen the Board as an ally but instead as just another enemy.

The vulnerability of Aborigines in relation to their children is also quite clearly demonstrated in these examples. White townspeople used Aboriginal children's schooling as a lever to drag in the State. As a result of white parents' manipulation, Aboriginal children were removed from their families in Walgett and Yass by either the Protection Board or the Child Welfare Department. Both the Board and the Education Department called in Child Welfare to exercise pressure on Aborigines asserting their rights to access to town services, most
blatantly at Moree. While not holding the total power of summary removal held by the Board, the Child Welfare court proceedings might be just as useless in protecting Aboriginal rights, as the police were instructed in such cases to "talk to" the magistrate to put either the Board or Education Department case, in private.¹

At the town level, however, there was also at least some conflict of interest within the white middle class although, not surprisingly, the evidence for this conflict is sparse. White women employers of Guri domestic labour in Yass, a businessman and a dissenting alderman in Moree, and perhaps others who went unrecorded, supported Aboriginal demands. Here again, the interests of white authorities were in conflict with those of the Protection Board: even the Municipal Council at Moree did not want Maris moved away altogether, but simply located less conspicuously while still accessibly. Aborigines found missionaries in some towns to be useful and active allies, but the established churches were not to be found amongst the ranks of their supporters. One of the most outraged white parents at Yass to protest to the Department of Education when Gurus broke the school segregation was the Rector of St Clement's Church.²

Aboriginal resistance to the denial of access to the services and precincts of the towns was sustained and, over the issue of security of residence in the town of their choice, was at least partially successful against both white townspeople and the Protection Board. Even when, as at Walgett, Aborigines were forced to leave under duress, they returned within a relatively short time. The resistance was, however, confined to individual communities in these areas over the 1920s. There was apparently no intercommunity organization but instead each community fought out its own crisis, by "digging in", facing the prosecutions, demolitions, gaolings, the threats to themselves and their children, until they had outlasted their opponents.

¹ APBM, 23/12/1919; 1/6/1921.
² WM Holliday, Rector, St Clement's, Yass, to Minister for Education, 18/6/1929. Yass public school files, DEIL.