

THE MECHANICS OF GENOCIDE

Colonial Policies and Attitudes Towards
the Tasmanian Aborigines, 1824-1836

by

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B. Desautels.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB Australian Dictionary of Biography

HRA Historical Records of Australia

Military Operations Copies of all Correspondence between Lieutenant Governor Arthur and His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the Subject of the Military Operations Lately Carried on Against the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land.

Minutes of Evidence, February-March 1830 Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee for the Affairs of the Aborigines.

Papers of G.A.R. Papers of George Augustus Robinson

NOTE: Except where stated otherwise, all references to government despatches are from Public Record Office copies and Aboriginal Committee and Executive Council minutes are from copies in the Tasmanian State Archives.

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INTRODUCTION

The history of British government and settler treatment of the Tasmanian Aborigines in the first three decades of white settlement in VDL, is an outstanding example of the destructive effects of Western colonialism. Prior to white settlement in 1803, there were approximately 3,000-5,000 Aborigines living on the island in viable tribal-based groups. The average tribe had 20-30 families and lived in harmony with the environment. By the standards of similar hunting and food gathering societies, the population was relatively high on the island.¹ By 1836, thirty-three years after British colonists had invaded the island, the Aboriginal population was near complete decimation. Apart from a dwindling population on the official Flinders Island settlement, the only survivors of the holocaust were those that escaped government control - a sealing community in the Bass Strait islands.

The near extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines resulted partly from the disruption and eventual elimination of their economic and social organization due to the spread of white farming settlements and the final physical removal of the Aborigines from their homeland in the early 1830s. Decline was also due to injuries, killings and abductions, particularly of women, by settlers, government employees, assigned and escaped convicts and sealers, together with the introduction of exotic diseases to a long isolated people.

The pattern of contact between Aborigines and settlers differed from other British colonies in the late eighteenth and early

nineteenth centuries where the indigenous inhabitants were often exploited as a cheap labour force. NSW and VDL were partly conceived of as gaols for surplus British felons, although economic and strategic considerations were of some importance. The penal character of the colonies meant that the local population was redundant in terms of supplying labour as there was a plentiful supply of free convict labour. The economic and social organization of the Aboriginal tribes also determined their fate. The frontier situation was similar to that of North America, South Africa and Brazil:

When the native populations consisted of small, sparsely settled politically acephalous, nomadic groups... the pattern of contact was frontier expansion of the whites (or westernized half-castes) punctuated by sporadic skirmishes, raids and guerilla warfare. Nomadic hunters or pastoralists, being unused to steady agricultural labour and being easily decimated by epidemic diseases, were of limited use. The general outcome was virtual genocide of the natives, encapsulation of their scattered remnants in huge game reserves, and the large scale importation of slave labour mostly from the agricultural societies of Africa.²

In VDL convicts supplied such an imported labour force. When the indigenous inhabitants of the lands conquered by the Europeans were "large densely settled, politically centralized, agricultural and even urban nation-states", the result was quite different. The invading colonists followed a policy of military subjugation rather than extermination and the native peoples became a labour force for the dominant group.³

Although the reasons for settlement in NSW and VDL were slightly different from other colonial endeavours, the colonies were formed on the premise established in the fifteenth century: that

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Although the reasons for settlement in NSW and VDL were slightly different from other colonial endeavours, the colonies were formed on the premise established in the fifteenth century: that

European nations had a natural right to spread over the world by virtue of their religion and supposed superior civilization. The extreme cultural gap between the Aborigines' non-agricultural and nomadic life and that of the British reinforced the view that the Aborigines had no rights to the land. This assumption underlay the thinking of all sections of colonial opinion in VDL.

Racist views of non-western peoples were the ideological concomitant of colonial expansion. Racism did not arise in VDL, but settlers inherited a tradition of European contempt for the indigenous inhabitants of conquered lands. However, this residue of racism was fostered through the direct need of settlers to justify dispossession. Thus the settlers, who were involved in the ongoing removal of the Aborigines, were the most ardent proponents of the inhumanity of the Aborigines. Before 1825, when settlement was limited and inter-racial conflict almost non-existent, the Aborigines were often viewed in a sympathetic light. "Noble savage" strains of thought even had some currency. Within the space of a year, views had hardened; the Aborigines were portrayed as inherently barbaric, treacherous and savage, fit only for extermination. Thus the reality of dispossession fostered the predominance of racism in colonial attitudes.

The conditions of settler life also encouraged the growth of racism. Psychological interpretations of racism as instinctive or as mental derangement should be rejected. But no clear distinction can be made between conscious or unconscious mental patterns. As Winthrop Jordan has observed in study of attitudes towards negroes, one must look at highly articulated ideas, through to

notions and traditional beliefs, but also at "the coded language of outstrivings for death and life and self identification".⁴

The relevance of this to attitudes towards Aborigines in VDL becomes apparent upon the examination of the situation of the early settlers. In the outback, traditional means of social and religious control were lessened and farmers were often extremely isolated. The environment was seen by settlers as unattractive and hostile, excepting where there chanced to be a resemblance with the British landscape. The Aborigines were viewed as part of this scene, indeed they seemed to have taken over many of its characteristics - its loneliness, its sharp violent harshness, its retiring nature. Their way of life involved an easy acceptance and coexistence with the environment, whereas the aim of the settler was to control his surroundings, to blot out its untamed and un-British characteristics. The Aborigines represented the antithesis to this effort and their style of existence produced an emotional repulsion which encouraged the perception of them as woodland animals rather than as members of a human society. The Gazette expressed this theme when commenting on the Lieutenant Governor, Arthur's, plan to set up new townships:

Indeed we should rejoice to find in a few years the entire face now cumbered with rude forest trees, speckled over with happy and affluent villages - to hear the hammer and the anvil where no sound expends but from the savages, or woodland brutes, from wild birds or the tempest - and to know that Education was sowing her immortal seed over the withered foliage of ignorance and superstition.⁵

A few colonists rejected the assertion that the Aborigines were fundamentally different. Thus George Augustus Robinson claimed

that the Aborigines could be reclaimed through Christian conversion and "civilization". He was supported in this by a few colonists and Lieutenant Governor Arthur, although as conflict intensified, the government became progressively less interested in this view. This philanthropic tendency was very weak in VDL compared to other Australian colonies. This was partly due to the lack of missionary activity in the smaller colony compared to NSW and ^{partly to} the timing of conflict. In VDL, the early intensification of struggle meant that the climax was reached before the victory of the humanitarians in England. Their 1837 *Select Committee Report* influenced colonial opinion in NSW during the heat of conflict in the 1840s and created strong pressure on local governments for moderation of action against indigenous inhabitants of conquered lands. More importantly, the size of other colonies and the less extreme nature of their conflict allowed a wider range of alternatives. In VDL, the physical difficulties of driving the Aborigines back and the greater threat posed to the colony by the Aborigines quickly overcame abstract ideas about the necessity to "civilize" and Christianize the heathens by association with Europeans. The struggle for economic and political control seemed to point in one direction - removal - either by transportation or extermination.

Policies and behaviour that were based on non-racist, but ethnocentric assumptions proved equally destructive for the Aborigines since they were associated with a belief in the desirability of eliminating the "inferior" Aboriginal culture and the undisputed right of British settlers to dispossess the Aborigines from their land. Friendship was sought, but totally on the white man's terms. The "great difficulty", wrote Arthur,

... is to proceed on a system which combines conciliation with the absolute necessity of expelling the Natives altogether from the settled districts until they shall conduct themselves in a more peaceful manner.⁶

Non-racist, but culturally chauvinist colonists did not condone indiscriminate killing, but nevertheless hastened the process of genocide by sanctioning the absolute right of expansion of white farming settlements and the eventual removal of the Aborigines from their homeland. The near extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines on Flinders Island at the hands of those who piously hoped to eventually "uplift" the Aborigines and incorporate them into European culture probably illustrates the destructive implications of ethnocentrism more forcefully than any other case of culture contact in the nineteenth century.

* * * *

This thesis seeks to elucidate two issues in the early history of VDL: the nature of colonial behaviour and attitudes towards the Aborigines and the mainsprings of government policy on Aboriginal/settler conflict. It is not directed towards Aboriginal responses to white settlement, although the dynamics of group contact has necessitated a limited coverage of this. Paucity of source material on years before 1824 and the sense in which the years between 1824 and 1836 constitute an historical unit in the history of government policy and contact experience, has determined a concentration on this period of the Arthur administration. Before 1824, conflict was limited, attitudes were hazy and government policy on the Aborigines was almost non-existent. After 1836, contact between colonists and Aborigines was again limited as

the Aborigines were in the main confined to the Aboriginal settlement on Flinders Island. Government policy after 1836 was concerned with a relatively minor stream of the previous period - the management of institutionalized Aborigines.

Between 1824 and 1836, the colony experienced rapid agricultural and population growth. The consequent spread of settlement meant that settlers and their shepherds were thrown into contact with the Aborigines. The period saw the gradual build up of hostilities into intermittent and open warfare in parts of the eastern side of the colony as settlers and Aborigines vied for possession of the land, the development of harsh and aggressive attitudes among almost all town and country dwellers, and succeeding formulations of a fluctuating government policy. The final outgrowth of this policy was the Black Line in late 1830 and the eventual removal by persuasion, manipulation and force of almost every Aborigine from the colony to a settlement on Flinders Island.

Literature on this period and the Tasmanian Aborigines in general is extensive; Plomley's bibliography, which is not exhaustive, contains over 900 entries.⁷ The bulk of this material is anthropological and thus outside the scope of this thesis, or simply a repetition of earlier histories of relations between Aborigines and settlers.⁸ Most accounts suffer from inadequate nineteenth century and often explicitly racist outlooks on the Tasmanian Aborigines.⁹ Thus, John West's lengthy treatment of Aboriginal relations with settlers is confined within perspectives of the inevitable decline of a doomed race,¹⁰ while James Bonwick extols the virtues of John Batman as a friend of "the unfortunate people" when his role was to capture and kill Aborigines for

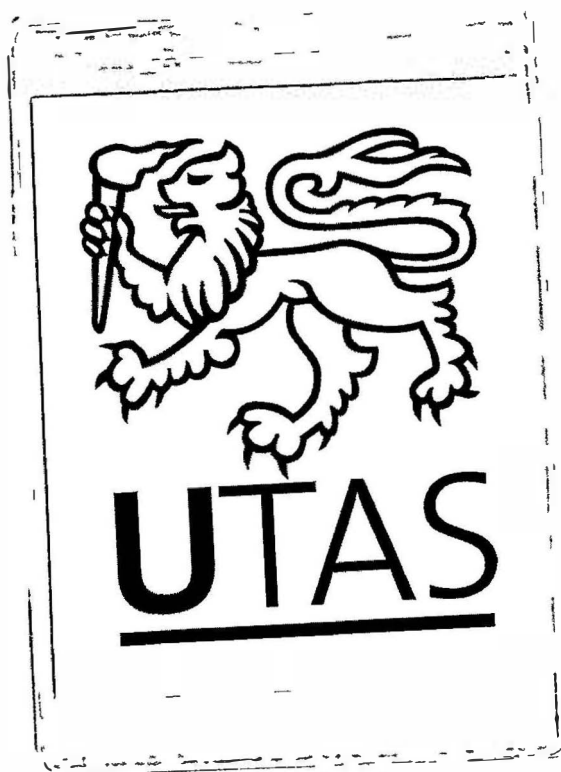
financial rewards.¹¹

Clive Turnbull's Black War, published in 1948, breaks new ground. His outlook is not marred by the cultural chauvinism of earlier works, is strongly sympathetic to the Aborigines and critical of colonial policy and attitudes. His perspective however, is inadequate in other respects. He views the destruction of Aborigines by colonists as a consequence of the brutal nature of penal society and disregards the categorization of the Aborigines by colonists as an out-group of sub-humans. Furthermore, his coverage of Aboriginal hostility towards whites is defensive and apologetic. He justifies Aboriginal attacks in terms of retaliation for a particular assault, avoiding the perspective of the Aboriginal/settler battle as a struggle for the land.

Turnbull's book, together with other twentieth century literature on the Tasmanian Aborigines, also suffers from relying only on sources which were available to the nineteenth century historian.¹² Thus Turnbull ignores conflict between the Colonial Office and the local government as he only uses the mutilated versions of the despatches published in the 1831 Parliamentary Paper. The Goldie Affair,¹³ which had significant implications for colonial policy, is absent from Turnbull's history. All reference to this incident was excluded from the published 1831 Parliamentary Paper.

More importantly, these works do not utilize indispensable source material, some of which has only been made available recently.¹⁴ The central collections are the Papers of George Augustus Robinson, the Arthur Papers and the Tasmanian Colonial Secretary

Office files on the Aborigines. At the time of writing this thesis, no work had covered these in depth.¹⁵ This study is an attempt to incorporate them into an examination of colonial attitudes and policy.



FOOTNOTES - INTRODUCTION

1. R. Jones, 'The Demography of Hunters and Farmers in Tasmania', in D.J. Mulvaney and J. Golson (eds.), Aboriginal Man and Environment in Australia, Canberra, 1971, pp.274-284.
2. Van den Berghe, Race and Racism: A Comparative Analysis, New York, 1967, p.125.
3. *ibid.*
4. W. Jordan, White Over Black, Chapel Hill, 1968, p.viii.
5. Gazette, June 14, 1825.
6. Arthur to Twiss, March 9, 1830.
7. N.J.B. Plomley, An Annotated Bibliography of the Tasmanian Aborigines, London, 1969.
8. D. Davies', The Last of the Tasmanians, Sydney, 1973, is a word for word replica of James Bonwick's nineteenth century works.
9. The main early works are J. Bonwick, The Last of the Tasmanians; or the Black War in Van Diemen's Land, London, 1870; J.E. Calder, Some Accounts of the Wars, Extirpation, etc. of the Native Tribes of Tasmania From Its Discovery In 1642 to the Present Time, Hobart, 1884; H. Melville, The History of Van Diemen's Land from the Year 1824-1835 Inclusive, G. Mackanness (ed.), Sydney, 1959, first published 1835; J. West, The History of Tasmania, A.G.L. Shaw (ed.), Sydney, 1971, first published 1852.
10. West, *op.cit.*
11. Bonwick, *op.cit.*, pp.188-191.
12. The published exceptions to this are the notes and commentary in N.J.B. Plomley (ed.), Friendly Mission, Hobart, 1966 and A.G.L. Shaw's introduction to Copies of All Correspondence Between Lieutenant-Governor Arthur and His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies... Van Diemen's Land, facsimile edition, Hobart, 1971.
13. See Chapter 5.
14. The Papers of George Augustus Robinson were not placed in the Mitchell Library until 1949.
15. Two such works written recently are L. Ryan, 'The Aborigines in Tasmania 1800-1974 and their problems with the Europeans', Ph.D. Thesis, Macquarie University, 1976; and V.R. Ellis, Trucanini - Queen or Traitor?, Hobart, 1976.

CHAPTER 1

A SURVEY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN COLONISTS AND ABORIGINES, 1803-1825

The Background of British Treatment of Colonial Peoples

It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that British imperial theory fully came to terms with the issues that arose when expansion into the New World brought Europeans into relations with non-Western peoples. However, in the early British treatment of indigenous peoples, and in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries debates over proper relations with these peoples, it is clear that many of the principles that had evolved from the Spanish contact with the New World during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were inherited by the British.

Several issues concerned Spanish scholastic theorists who took an interest in the validity of their country's actions in the New World. The official position upheld by Spain was that the inhabitants of America must "acknowledge the Church as the ruler and superior of the whole world". Failure to do so would justify the Spanish making war in order to enforce obedience to the Church.¹ This was modified in 1512 to allow the Indians some rights to freedom and humane treatment. At the same time, it was maintained that divine and temporal law justified placing the Indians and their lands in the control of Spanish conquerors.²

The official position was in fact a compromise between those who thought that the Indians, because of natural incapacity, were entitled to few rights, and those who maintained that the Indians

were in no important respect inherently different from Europeans and thus only to be subjected to spiritual, not temporal, dominance. The leading proponent of the former position was the scholar Juan Gines de Sepulveda. Using the authority of Aristotle he maintained that the Indians were "marked out for subjection" because of their barbaric social customs.³

On the other hand, Las Casas, the historian and apostle of the Indians, claimed that since "all peoples of the world are men" the subjection of some on the grounds of supposed inherent incapacities was unjustified.⁴ Las Casas and the other defenders of the Indians' essential humanity were, however, in agreement with their theological opponents on the right of Christian nations to preach to and travel through the lands of the heathens. Many maintained that this conversion could reasonably be aided by forceful measures if any hindrance was encountered. The implications of this position are seen in the following statement by Francisco Suarez, the leading theologian interested in the issue at the end of the century:

... the Pope can distribute among temporal princes and kings the provinces and realms of the unbelievers; not in order that the former may take possession of these regions according to their own will, for that would be tyranny... but in order that they may make provision for the sending of preachers of the Gospel to those infidels, and may protect such preachers by their power...⁵

Further to this assertion of the rights of Christians to control the heathen lands, theologians such as Francis de Vitoria, claimed that trade could not justifiably be denied to the Spanish

given the operations of divine law, as well as the laws of nature and of nations.⁶

Although the field of overseas exploration and settlement was dominated by Spain and Portugal during the sixteenth century, some private British voyages with Royal authorization were undertaken. There was little attention given to the moral and legal rights of the British in travelling through or occupying the lands of heathens. The main concern of the British at this stage was to prevent their exclusion from the new lands on account of the activity of other European powers. It was simply assumed that the occupation of these lands by native peoples did not represent such a restriction. Thus, both John Cabot and Raleigh were informed by the Crown that it was their right to occupy and possess all lands that were not inhabited by Christians.⁷

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the British had contact with the inhabitants of the Americas, India, China, the Pacific Islands, Asia and Australia. The principles upon which the Spanish defended their activities in the New World were adopted in large measure by them. Occupations of the new lands and exploitation of its peoples and resources were justified by the supposed right of Christian and "civilized" peoples to spread over the world. Added to this were the advantages which, it was claimed, would accrue to uncivilized peoples and lands by commercialization and conquest of untouched lands.

In contrast to the Spanish, the British sought to mask their designs for mastery in heathen lands by stressing the protection

which the British would provide for the indigenous inhabitants of the new lands. They did not sanction the type of forceful conversion often advocated by the Spanish. Instead, Indians and slaves were to be "invited to the Christian religion".⁸

When one turns to the Australian colonies and examines the instructions regarding settlement given to the first governors of New South Wales and Van Dieman's Land, one is struck by elements of continuity in attitudes to colonial peoples, but also by a neglect of some of the issues normally involved in the question of the proper relations with indigenous inhabitants. The Aborigines were, as a matter of course, considered British subjects, owing to the fact of British possession which derived from discovery and settlement. Following from this was a reiteration of several points in the instructions given in 1670 by Charles II to the Council of Foreign Plantations, which stressed the need for protection and conciliation.⁹ However, the usual emphasis on the advantages for the native peoples of Christian conversion was absent.¹⁰ Nor was there even a reference to the possibility of the Aborigines being dispossessed on account of British settlement.

These early differences in attitude can be explained by first examining the extreme cultural differences which the British perceived between the Aborigines of Australia and the indigenous peoples of other colonies, and second, by noting the novel nature of British settlement in the new Australian colonies.

The Aborigines, unlike almost all inhabitants of other European colonies, were a nomadic people, not in possession of any item

which was of trade value to the British. Since they did not cultivate the soil the issue of their rights to the land did not present itself to the British. Captain Cook, although a sympathetic observer of the Aborigines, probably laid the basis for this. He wrote in 1770 that the Aborigines

... live wholly by fishing and hunting, but mostly by the former, for we never saw one inch of cultivated land in the whole country.¹¹

According to Cook, the Aborigines' nomadic life and dependence on the day's hunting food, were features that resembled the situation of "wild beasts".¹² As such the Aborigines' life style would have presented even less reason for their consideration as owners of the soil than in other colonies where such an extreme culture gap between the original inhabitants and the British was not present.

The second reason for the different official approach arose from the nature of British designs for the colonies. As in the case of NSW, the decision to form a settlement in Van Dieman's Land arose partly as a result of an awareness of the commercial and strategic advantages of the island. The colony was also planned as a subsidiary gaol. The importance of this latter function can be seen in the instructions given to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Derwent Settlement for they were orientated towards an administrative and legal system appropriate only for a penal settlement.¹³ Private enterprise however, was not neglected, and there is evidence to suggest that strategic considerations, together with the commercial possibilities of sealing and whaling, were important factors in the decision to settle at the Derwent.¹⁴

Even given the multi-purposed nature of the new settlements, it is clear that the Aborigines were seen as irrelevant to the new venture. Convicts supplied the colony's labour requirements and thus there was no role for the Aborigines as an indigenous labour force. Lieutenant John Bowen, initially in command at Risdon Cove, expressed this indifference to the existence of the Aborigines in the colony in 1803:

I have not seen a single native yet but some of the people found them on our first arrival. They appeared very shy and have since retired entirely from us - not apprehending they would be of any use to us, I have not made any search after them thinking myself well off if I never see them again.¹⁵

Reasons For Conflict

The contrast in the development of relations between Aborigines and colonists in New South Wales and Van Dieman's Land can be gleaned from the fact that in the former colony, by 1838, forty years after the beginning of settlement, relations had settled into a fairly peaceful pattern. The major conflict was yet to come.¹⁶ In VDL during the same period of settlement, the intensity of conflict led to the removal of every remaining Aborigine from the colony. To understand the particular pattern of contact between Aborigines and colonists after 1803 in VDL, it is necessary to examine the early economic development and geographical make-up of the island, for only by so doing can we discern the origins of conflict and the unusually quick development of an intensely hostile and violent relationship between the two peoples.

VDL is distinguished by sharp natural contrasts which made it both advantageous and disadvantageous for settlement.¹⁷ On the one

hand, through sections of the island the soil is fertile and the climate is marked by reliable rainfall and lack of extreme temperatures. On the other hand, over half of the island is unsuited to white settlement being made up of barren plateaux, mountains, hills and lakes. Since the island is small, this meant that settlement was likely to be concentrated.

From the outset, settlement in VDL was bipolar, beginning in the Derwent and Tamar estuaries and proceeding north and south. River systems played an important part in both the island's settlements, partly because of the natural tendency of settlers to choose land within easy reach of water, but also because land near river banks was more open. As Plomley has pointed out, it was these well-watered regions which originally supported large numbers of Aborigines.¹⁸

Although the early colonists had high expectations for the colony, cultivation proceeded very slowly at first.¹⁹ By 1806, the colony was still completely dependent on NSW for essential food supplies, having only 100 acres under wheat, 264 head of cattle and 718 sheep. This was due to the hazards of pioneering (their seed failed to germinate at first), and the poor state and insufficient numbers of convicts. The slow start was also due to the deployment of scarce labour resources by officers to provide shelter, port facilities and to promote private profit ventures. Exceptions to this poor performance were the advances made in sealing and whaling.²⁰

The disadvantages of a satellite colony became apparent after 1806 when floods in the older colony led to a sharp reduction in the quantity of food shipped to VDL. To overcome the food crisis, and also seeing the possibilities of profit for his fellow officers, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Risdon settlement, David Collins, instituted a system of high payment for certain essential food items supplied to the government store. Large sections of the population engaged in hunting kangaroo, especially in 1807 when the value of kangaroo meat reached the inflated price of 1/6d per pound. The occupation was so popular that Collins wrote of the colony's inhabitants becoming "a set of Wood-Rangers".²¹

Many convicts sent out hunting did not return and thus the first period of bushranging originated. As will be shown later, this means of solving the food crises had important consequences for relations between Aborigines and colonists, for the Aborigines were brought into contact with the most brutal elements of the white population. What is important to note here is that the dependence of a large new community on the island's game for food led to competition with the Aborigines for increasingly scarce game resources. A letter from a resident in VDL in 1807 to his friend in London described the process:

I however expect that the persecuted kangaroo, which daily becomes more scarce will, as was the case at Port Jackson, forsake the ground contiguous to any of our camps,... I think, from our ravages, we gradually accomplish the effect of driving the natives from all parts contiguous to any of our camps,... They often spear our dogs, and attempt to pay us the same compliment, and not infrequently

will waddy our huntsmen, when they have not been inclined to part with what kangaroo they may have killed.²²

The Reverend ^{Robert} Knopwood recorded in his diary similar cases of violence arising from resentment of the whites' hunting activities.²³

The period 1810-1816 saw the emergence of the colony from a dependent penal status to a thriving colony. By the end of this period, the colony was self-sufficient in beef, mutton and grain and a large surplus of the latter product was exported. Population increased during these years by forty five percent. Prosperity was so great that the island's merchants provided sufficient competition to lead Governor Macquarie to safeguard the older colony's trading profits by closing the ports of VDL in 1812.

The cause of this fulfilment of VDL's early promise lay initially in the government's lowering of the price of kangaroo meat sold to the Commissariat Store in 1811. Farmers therefore turned away from hunting and back to their land to produce wheat, beef and mutton. Grain production was further stimulated by the influx of five hundred and thirty three Norfolk Island settlers who were settled on the fertile banks of the Derwent at New Norfolk. Other important reasons for growth during this period were the greater concentration of the convict labour force on farm work and the granting of land outside the inner Hobart area after 1812. However, by 1816, settlement was still fairly much confined to the two main population centres, Hobart and Launceston. The total population of the island was only 1,500.

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Although the rate of economic growth slackened after 1816, agricultural expansion during the next nine years until 1825 led to the rapid occupation of the fertile and well-watered areas of the Derwent and Tamar valleys and the opening up of the Midlands. The reasons for this expansion of settlement were two-fold. The earlier growth in the colony encouraged many "gentlemen farmers" with capital to come to the colony. In 1822 alone, over 600 settlers came.²⁴ Using the criterion of the size of initial capital, settlers were allowed varying sizes of land grants. Another important development during this period was an enormous influx of convicts. At the same time, a far greater proportion (51% compared to 18%) was employed on settlers' farms.

The areas into which settlers moved had originally supported large numbers of Aborigines and the steady growth of hostilities during the 1816-1825 period can be largely attributed to this intrusion of colonists into traditional hunting areas. Although the actual numbers of attacks on colonists and their stock was not large, they were frequent and widespread enough²⁵ to indicate the beginnings of a growing determination on the part of Aboriginal tribes to resist white encroachment on their lands and take revenge for the brutal actions committed against them. At this stage, however, much contact between Aborigines and colonists was still friendly or at least non-antagonistic.²⁶ Thus Captain Clark of the Clyde, described the state of relations in 1824 as follows:

They used to visit us at our farms, and, after remaining a few days, retire, apparently satisfied with the small quantity of bread and potatoes that were given.²⁷

Side by side with the expansion of white settlement after 1816,

certain structural weaknesses in the economy developed. These manifested themselves in serious hardship for the small holder. The colony suffered severely from the uncertainty of the market and there was constant concern over the problem of overproduction. The farmers' lack of a reliable market and the whole colony's need for new enterprises were exemplified in the growth of personal debt in the colony. Sorell estimated in 1820 that two thirds of the colony's settlers were in debt and that for the whole colony, indebtedness was running at £15 per head. As Rimmer points out: "The gentlemen farmers with capital were lured to Van Diemen's Land by deceptively attractive land grants and promises of assistance did not at first prosper."²⁸ Although the colony picked up in the early 1820s, with the growth of an export market in wheat and wool, the end of 1823 saw the beginnings of an economic downturn which continued well into the 1820s.²⁹ Important in the causes of the colony's lack of economic buoyancy was a currency problem which lasted in varying degrees of intensity till 1850, and the government's abandonment of a protective system of wheat pricing in 1823.³⁰ It is important to note these economic uncertainties of the period, for when conflict intensified in the late 1820s, the settlers' belief in the economic incompetence of Arthur's government influenced the Aborigines' issue.

In the economic history of VDL between 1803 and 1825, the elements were present for the development of acute conflict between Aborigines and colonists. The Aborigines had traditionally existed in close harmony with their environment. Contrary to what is often thought, they had a relatively high proportion of

people to land by hunter-gatherer standards.³¹ Due to the unfavourable living and hunting conditions in much of the island, the tribes were concentrated along the eastern river systems and on the coast. When the British colonists arrived they too looked to these well watered regions for their subsistence. Unlike their counterparts on the mainland, the Tasmanian Aborigines could not simply be pushed beyond the limits of settlement, because the physical nature of the island would not allow this. The comparatively small area of fertile land meant that, unlike the situation in NSW, white settlement would be concentrated leaving little space for the continued existence of tribal remnants. After 1816, when the spread of white settlement proceeded rapidly, the basis for intense conflict between the two groups was laid. The Aborigines' economic life was undermined and the tribes' social organization was disrupted.

The appearance of a detribalized group of Aborigines in the early 1820s was evidence of this disturbance of Aboriginal life. This group initially spearheaded the resistance to the whites. They were led by a Sydney Aborigine, Mosquito, who had been transported from Sydney for murder in 1818. Mosquito was employed in VDL as a stock keeper and tracker of bushrangers. Soon leaving his white company, he lived in the bush with a group of detribalized Tasmanians. He passed some time peacefully, but then took to violence against whites, it is said initially for reasons of self-defence. Mosquito and his Aboriginal followers were held responsible for the stepping up of attacks in 1824. The Gazette reported at least six violent encounters in that year.³²

Early attitudes of Colonists and Aborigines

Before 1825, conflict between Aborigines and colonists was still comparatively uncommon. Opinions were not formed against the background of intense spates of violent encounters that came later. Colonists, who were not indifferent to the Aborigines in the early period, often expressed favourable views towards them, many influenced by preconceived Christian notions about the equality of man. In this early period, official documents lack almost any mention of the Aborigines. Before Governor Arthur arrived in the colony in 1824, the limited contact between the two groups did not seem to warrant the formulation of a government policy towards the Aborigines. Such a policy was not formed until the late 1820s. Aboriginal behaviour also differed before and after 1825. Before the rapid spread of white settlement in the mid-1820s, Aborigines' responses to colonists were more varied and not as uniformly hostile as later.

Even if extraordinary efforts had been made by the whites to live in harmony with the Aborigines (which was unlikely given the ethnocentric assumptions and behaviour of British colonists occupying new lands), it is likely that the mere existence of white settlement of Aboriginal soil would have predisposed the Aborigines to some hostility. In their early contacts with explorers, the Aborigines, although sometimes friendly, had often revealed a deep-seated suspicion of any whites they believed were intruding into their own territory. As in the case of Aborigines in NSW, the Tasmanian tribes viewed particular parts of the island as theirs,³³ and although they allowed other tribes the right of

access, they would not have viewed the British colonists' decision to settle on their land at all favourably.

The existence of this initial hostility was seen in the northern settlement soon after the arrival of the first whites. Colonel Paterson, when writing to Sir Joseph Banks on the first encounter with Aborigines, reported an incident which revealed the unfavourable light in which the whites were regarded before any violence had been offered by them. He described a relatively friendly visit two days after their arrival, in which some tension had existed when the Aborigines found that the whites would not give them "everything they favoured!". Some days later

"... a party of them supposed to be the same attacked a guard of Marines who were posted at the Lower Head and insisted on taking away the tent, they seized the Sergeant and were about to throw him over a rock into the sea, when they were fired upon, one was killed and another wounded."³⁴

Neither were the whites disposed to view the Aborigines favourably. The idealism which had characterized the approach of officials and settlers in NSW in the early years of settlement ³⁵ was noticeably absent in VDL. The new colonists coming from NSW had already experienced fifteen years of contact with Aborigines. The naive hope that the offering of presents and other forms of friendly communication with civilized whites would prevent disputes and lead the way to the absorption of Aborigines into white culture, was soon found to be unrealistic in NSW. The quick development of a hostile disposition by the Aborigines soon led to a reversal of the official approach of friendliness, and settlers were warned in 1796 by Governor Hunter to afford each other "assistance" when

bodies of Aborigines appeared on their farms.³⁶ Writers such as Watkin Tench reversed earlier complimentary appraisals of Aboriginal life and concluded that close contact with Aborigines led to the view that their status as human beings was so low that "they may dispute the right of precedency with the Hottentots, or the shivering tribes... of Magellan".³⁷

It is interesting in this context to examine the attitudes of the first Lieutenant-Governor, David Collins, for his experience with the Aborigines in NSW must have influenced his treatment of them in VDL. Collins had taken a deep interest in the Aborigines and, as early as 1795, expressed his intention to write an account of the colonists' transactions with them.³⁸ When his history of the early years of the colony appeared in 1801,³⁹ his treatment of the Aborigines was typical of those who felt somewhat repelled at close examination. Collins felt that although the Aborigines must be given credit for the existence of some humane customs and feelings, and knowledge of right and wrong, their treatment of women, ideas of courtship, and savage methods of punishment placed them only a little above brute creation.⁴⁰ His largely unsympathetic view of their original state did not however, preclude the possibility of change:

That they are ignorant savages can not be disputed/ but I hope they do not in the foregoing pages, appear to be wholly incapable of one day civilized and useful members of society.⁴¹

Significantly, Collins did not attribute Aboriginal hostility to their "treacherous nature", as was often the case. He blamed the whites for provoking the Aborigines and believed that due to their

cruel treatment they were not aware of the friendly intentions of the leadership of the settlement.⁴²

A different opinion, and one probably more commonly held, was expressed by a VDL resident in 1807. He felt that little could be accomplished with the island's Aborigines for,

Twenty years has had little effect in taming them at Port Jackson their natural ferocity being aided by the experience of their more civilized neighbours.⁴³

Even before official British settlement had begun in 1803, some Aboriginal tribes experienced contact with whites which would have given them solid grounds for suspicion towards future settlers. Sealing in the Bass Strait islands had begun as early as 1798, and the quick profits made, as well as the advantages of isolation for escaped convicts, led to the industry's quick expansion. It was undertaken with such vigour that as early as 1803, Governor Hunter expressed fear for the survival of seals in the Straits.⁴⁴ Almost from the first, sealers used Aboriginal women as an additional labour force as well as for prostitution. The exact relationship between the Aboriginal tribes and the sealers is difficult to determine given the shortage of source material on the early sealing settlements, and the conflicting nature of the evidence that does exist. Captain James Kelly, who visited the Straits settlement in 1816, claimed that the Aboriginal women were obtained by barter with the rest of the tribe and that the women were relatively happy with the sealers.⁴⁵ Others maintained that women were forceably taken from their tribes and were subject to extremely brutal treatment to gain their submission.⁴⁶ This latter view seems to have been accepted by the colonists at large,⁴⁷ and was given

support by G.A. Robinson after his travels among the sealers in 1830 and 1831. One feels, especially in the case of Robinson, that this view of the relationship between sealers and Aboriginal women was coloured by an extreme aversion to the idea of white men having sexual contact with or control over more than one woman. As Plomley has pointed out, the truth probably lies somewhere in between - relationships based on force to gain submission, and relationships based on fairly ready subservience probably both existed.⁴⁸ Although in the early years some women probably were procured by barter, as time went on and the numbers of Aboriginal women was drastically reduced,⁴⁹ it seems unlikely that the tribes would have freely given their women up.

Far from acting in a manner which would dampen any suspicious or hostile feelings on the part of the Aborigines, the first white arrivals took the opposite course. The first offensive action was taken at Risdon on May 3, 1804, only eight months after the formation of the first settlement on the Derwent. Although there is sufficient conflicting evidence to make it impossible to establish with certainty the exact sequence of events,⁵⁰ the central fact seems clear: Lt. Moore, in charge through the temporary absence of Collins, ordered his men to fire on a large, peaceful hunting party of Aborigines. Although Moore may have been genuinely apprehensive of the intentions of such a large party of Aborigines so close to the white settlement, the fact that he was drunk at the time could have affected his judgement.⁵¹ The non-aggressive intentions of the Aborigines and the irresponsibility of Moore's action was attested to by an eye witness, Edward White. According to White, the Aboriginal party, which consisted of 300 men, women and children, was engaged in the hunting of kangaroo. The Aborigines

did not, as claimed by Lt. Moore, attack a colonist's home. The attack on the Aborigines was entirely unprovoked.⁵² There is no reliable estimate as to how many Aborigines were killed. Rev. Knopwood claimed it was as little as five or six,⁵³ but other accounts put the figure much higher.⁵⁴ Collins, who was aware of the possible effect of such an action on future relations with the Aborigines, deplored the event and ordered the return of a captured native child.⁵⁵

This incident left its mark on both Aborigines and colonists. The Aborigines' suspicion of the white settlers could only have been confirmed, and Collins's opinion that the Aborigines' attack on a working party a few days later was a direct result of the original killing, was undoubtedly correct.⁵⁶ For colonists, this incident assumed great importance and for many years it was looked to as an explanation of all subsequent hostilities. Kelly's statement in 1830, that Risdon "was the cause of all that happened afterwards",⁵⁷ became a typical way of viewing the rise of subsequent conflict. It was far preferable to put the ensuing hostility down to an unfortunate mistake in the early days of settlement, than to look for the causes in the nature of settlement itself.

This offensive action against the Aborigines by the military was paralleled by the inhumane actions of convicts who were brought into close contact with Aborigines after 1805 when they were sent into the bush to forage for food. The actions of convicts and bushrangers were described in detail by numerous nineteenth century commentators.⁵⁸ They ranged from murder and rape to various forms of human mutilation. The following extract indicates some-

thing of the extent of disregard of Aboriginal life. Upon receiving a request from the British reformer, William Wilberforce, in December, 1818, to supply him with any information on the treatment of the Tasmanian Aborigines, Rowland Hassall wrote the following:

I received your letter and feel thankful that there are those in my native country who feel for the wretched [sic] condition of the heathen. With respect to the conduct of Europeans towards the inhabitants of the Derwent... I remember asking the question - "Why are there no natives seen in the town?" and the answer given was - "We shoot them whenever we find them..."⁵⁹

The numbers of murdered Aborigines was so great that commentators noted that the ground in certain areas was strewn with Aboriginal bones. Some settlers collected bullet ridden skulls as mementos.⁶⁰

The most notorious example of the bushrangers' treatment of Aborigines was reported by James Hobbs to the Aboriginal Committee in 1830, and it subsequently appeared in many secondary accounts. Hobbs reported that Carrots, a convict turned bushranger "once cut off a Native man's head at Oyster Bay, and made his wife hang it round her neck, and carry it as a plaything..."⁶¹

A recent writer, Carl Canteri, has suggested that the usual coverage of bushrangers' treatment of the Aborigines is simply part of the myth that has been created about the bushrangers' unsavory characters. He points out, for example, that the story of the bushranger Michael Howe shooting his native companion Mary in 1817 was probably just as untrue as the incorrect reporting of many others of his actions. On the positive side, he points out that there may have been some bartering between the Aborigines and the bushrangers involving dogs and skins.⁶² As in the case of the

Risdon incident, an exaggerated emphasis on the bushrangers' inhumane actions during this early period of settlement was convenient if blame for conflict was to be removed from the white settlers' intrusion onto Aboriginal lands. Although Canteri depends a little too much on speculation and conjecture, an unfortunate necessity when relying on the fragmentary pieces of evidence for this early period, there is probably a deal of truth in his assertions. He does not however present sufficient evidence to discount the bushrangers' actions as an important contributing factor in explaining Aboriginal hostility.

Two other important factors which contributed to Aboriginal hostility during the first twenty years of settlement were the abduction of Aboriginal children and the maltreatment of Aboriginal women by colonists. The capture of a child after the Risdon attack in 1804 seems to have been the first example of abduction, although as indicated above, the child was returned to its tribe. A large number of children were abducted by the settlers over this period, and generally held as unpaid workers, although there is at least one instance of a child being held for "scientific observation".⁶³ Both Lieutenant-Governor Davy and Lieutenant-Governor Collins realized that these abductions were likely to exacerbate the already worsening situation,⁶⁴ and instructed settlers to refrain from such actions. Nothing, however, was done by the government to ensure that these instructions were observed.

The disproportionate number of males to females in the white population together with the Aborigines' increasing desire for European food, ensured the existence of much Aboriginal prostitution. John Jones, a convict working around George Town since

the early 1820s, wrote that "It was well understood that the Black men would prostitute their women to the stockmen and others for sugar, bread and other such things".⁶⁵ Brodribb's comment in 1830 that this communication "did not excite ill blood"⁶⁶ was probably partially correct. The use of women to cement social relationships was a common practice on the mainland among Aboriginal tribes,⁶⁷ and it is possible that the same custom existed among the Tasmanian Aborigines. Where antagonism often did arise was when the whites refused to pay their obligations for the use of women and in cases where sexual contact was by force.⁶⁸

* * * *

During the early twenties the first signs of an awakening interest in the Aborigines on the part of colonists took place. It was evident in books published in the early twenties, in the colony's newspaper, The Hobart Town Gazette, and in the correspondence of settlers and the first missionaries, the Wesleyans. The attention given to the Aborigines reflected the changing nature of the young colony. Before 1816, the predominately penal nature of the colony had confined settlement to a small radius around Hobart and Launceston and thus contact with, and interest in, the Aborigines remained limited. The rapid influx of free settlers and the consequent expansion of settlement after this period, brought colonists into more contact with Aborigines and was accompanied by a greatly increased interest in all aspects of the colony, including its original inhabitants. As hostilities increased, some settlers expressed fears about the possibility of Aborigines posing a serious problem to the extension of settlement, while other more sympathetic observers, were apprehensive of the likely detrimental effects of settlement on the Aborigines.

In most of the accounts of the Aborigines, the influence of orthodox religious notions of the nature of man can be detected. The Christian tradition traced the origins of human life back to a single, unique act of creation. According to the Christian interpretation, all men, regardless of subsequent degradation, were formed in the image of God. The implications of this theme for Christian inhabitants of the colony were stated in the Gazette of April 25, 1818:

Can they raise themselves from this sad condition? Or do they not claim our assistance? And shall that assistance be denied? Those who fancy that 'God did make of one blood all the nations upon the earth', must be convinced that the Natives of whatever manner formed, can be civilized, nay can be Christianized. The moral Governor of the world will hold us accountable.⁶⁹

The contents of missionary correspondence on the Aborigines suggests that the Christian view of the essential equality of all men was upheld in the face of what seemed to many, conflicting evidence. William Horton, a young Wesleyan missionary,⁷⁰ resident in the colony for some years, gave a clear example of the tension between observation and religious orthodoxy:

Indeed the shape of their bodies is almost the only mark by which one can recognise them as fellow-men; and were it not for the force of their evidence, besides which their condition and habits present to the mind of the beholder, I should without any hesitation affirm that they are a race of beings altogether distinct from ourselves, and class them amongst the inferior species of irrational animals. But as it is a revealed truth, that God has made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell upon the earth... even the poor aborigines of this island are partakers of the same nature with ourselves; the offspring of the same God and the objects of His redeeming love.⁷¹

Part of the reason for this hardly flattering view of the Aborigines was that the missionaries' only contact with Aborigines in VDL was restricted to a detribalized group led by Mosquito, a native of Sydney. This group's appearance and habits were repulsive to the missionaries due to its diseased state and use of tobacco and alcohol. But the missionaries' abhorrence of the Aborigines also centred upon typical features of traditional Aboriginal life. Horton indicated his revulsion when writing of the preparation of a meal:

I was disgusted with their slovenly method of cooking the animals they had caught. They merely took out the entrails, which they threw to their dogs, and then without stripping off the skin, placed the carcass upon the fire. When it had lain there about 20 minutes, and had been turned several times, it was taken off as sufficiently roasted, although it could scarcely be warmed through. They then tore it to pieces, like dogs, with their hands and teeth, and devoured it without salt and without vegetables.⁷²

Paradoxically religious ideas which led Christians to assert the underlying equality of men, whether civilized or not, also worked to separate colonists from Aborigines. For nineteenth century Europeans, the possession of faith was a major dividing line between peoples. The Aborigines, unlike almost all other branches of the human race, seemed to many colonists to have few religious notions and sometimes it was even concluded that they had no religion at all. This tended to place them in a separate category of men.

Although many colonists were revolted by the habits of the Aborigines and appalled at their social organization, particularly

their treatment of women, there was considerable uncertainty about the inevitability of their state. Much attention was focussed in the early 1820s on the possibilities of educating Aboriginal children and thereby proving once and for all the mental capabilities of the race.⁷³ Two methods advocated to achieve civilization were the establishment of special Aboriginal institutions and the rearing of Aboriginal children by settlers. A typical suggestion was made by T.L. Richardson in 1824, when he proposed civilizing Aborigines through the removal of children from their parents and their subsequent instruction. The parents would in turn be educated through contact with their own children and the offering of "refreshments and trifling presents or necessities" during visits with their offspring "at such stated periods as may be judged proper".⁷⁴

Another colonist, Dr. William Paton, suggested a plan for ascertaining their "capacity for letters and general moral improvement" by the attempted education of an Aboriginal child. Paton was sympathetic to the view that head shape determined intelligence, and believed that the Tasmanians "have a certain character of head", which, he implied, led to their inferior intelligence. His own charge however, was fortunate in having a "very tolerable" size of brain before the ears, and with information supplied by his observations of the early response of the child to his instruction, he was most optimistic of the chances for "progress".⁷⁵ Paton's adherence to a theory of biological determinism was unusual in the colony, for at this stage most commentators of Aboriginal capabilities maintained, at least in theory, that the possibilities for "improvement" were not limited by innate mental deficiencies in Aborigines.

The culmination of this interest in educating the Aborigines came in November 1824, when, after the visit of a large group of friendly Aborigines into Hobart Town, a public meeting was held in Saint David's Church to consider Governor Arthur's proposal for an "Institution for the civilization and instruction of the Aborigines".⁷⁶ Both the Rev. William Bedford, the colony's chaplain, and Ralph Mansfield, a Wesleyan missionary, were involved in the scheme. Although financial support and other co-operation was offered by the government and the public, the planned institution never got off the ground. Mansfield explained to his Missionary Society the reasons for its failure:

I by no means think the interest has declined but the agricultural and commercial distress of the Colony, together with the formidable ravages of a banditti of convicts who have ever since been at large among the interior settlements, have completely absorbed the public attention.⁷⁷

However, the failure of the proposed institution was not due solely to these local factors. Missionary endeavours aimed at educating the Aborigines in NSW during this period also met with a lack of support from both the government and the public.⁷⁸ In fact, at no stage during the first half of the nineteenth century, did missionary endeavours come to anything without the support and direction of the British Colonial Office. The first mention in official records of the need to civilize or convert Aborigines in the Australian colonies did not come til 1825⁷⁹ and it was not until 1834 that the Colonial Office showed strong signs of interest in the question.⁸⁰ The 1831 British Parliamentary Paper on the progress of civilization with the Aborigines of NSW and VDL is evidence of the particular disregard for the Tasmanian Aborigines. Apparently not one document showing the efforts at civilization

sakes have been bereaved of their original possessions".

Towards the end of 1824, there was evidence of a growing impatience with the Aborigines as the frequency of their attacks increased.

After the third attack on the property of Mr. Hobbs of Eastern

Marshes, a new tone was evident in the Colonial Times:

Now we really think that these depredations are so alarming as to demand serious attention, as in all probability, unless they are now checked their progress will at some future period be attended with more fatal consequences.⁸⁴

Two months earlier, the killing of a storekeeper on Hobbs's property had been commented on in terms of "the sad example of the impudence of molesting Natives, who have been considered the most harmless race of people in the world".⁸⁵ In the later article the writer advocated only the use of "human measures", although it was ominously suggested that the indiscriminate use of firearms might become necessary.

Settler opinion was moving in the same direction, but at a faster rate. George Meredith of Great Swampport reported "another instance of 'native savageness' - the death of an assigned servant, in July 1824. He informed Arthur that "considerations of self-preservation" led to a different course of action than had been advocated by the government, and that the intensity of attacks made it "indispensable to keep them at a distance".⁸⁶

Thomas Anstey, who was to become an important administrative figure in government relations with Aborigines, anticipated future events in a letter written to Arthur in April 1825. He also maintained that the time had come for some positive action to prevent

serious future conflict. He expressed a growing feeling when he wrote that "those wretched beings will never settle into good order and propriety".⁸⁷ From the mid-1820s, the only advocates of "improvement" were the town dwellers. Anstey's solution to the problem was a final one - their banishment from the island to the coast of New Holland. He claimed removal was now widely canvassed among the colonists. It would have the fortuitous effect of giving the Aborigines "little chance of their ever coming into contact again with Europeans".⁸⁸ Although at this stage such a proposal was considered by many to be outrageous, we shall see in the next chapter that as the 1820s progressed, most observers viewed it as the only solution to continual conflict between colonists and Aborigines.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 1

1. W.E. Washburn, Red Man's Land/White Man's Law, New York, 1971, p.7. Further accounts of early Spanish attitudes to non-Western peoples can be found in P.D. Curtin, The Image of Africa, London, 1965, pp.32-33 and R.H. Popkin, 'The Philosophical Basis of Eighteenth Century Racism', in H.E. Pagliaro (ed.), Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture, Vol.3, Cleveland, 1973, pp.247-248.
2. Washburn, op.cit., pp.14-16.
3. ibid., pp.14-16.
4. ibid., p.16.
5. ibid., p.20.
6. ibid., p.21.
7. ibid., pp.29-30.
8. Instructions from Charles II to the Council of Foreign Plantations, quoted in Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements), British Parliamentary Paper, No.425, 1837, p.4.
9. ibid., Instructions to Governor Phillip, H.R.A., 1, i, pp.13-14; Instructions to Lieutenant-Governor Collins, H.R.A., 1, iv, p.12. These Instructions regarding the Aborigines were repeated to subsequent Governors of NSW and VDL until 1825.
10. C.D. Rowley's statement that Governor Phillip's Instructions "could be interpreted as an injunction to Christianise the heathen", is incorrect. Rowley has mistakenly taken the paragraph on religious observance in the Instructions as applying to Aborigines. This reference to religion was directed to the European inhabitants, not to the Aborigines. Destruction of Aboriginal Society, Penguin, 1972, p.19; H.R.A., 1, i, p.14.
11. Quoted in J.C. Woolmington (ed.), Aborigines in Colonial Society: 1788-1850, Melbourne, 1973, p.3.
12. ibid.
13. H.R.A., 1, iv, pp.10-16, esp. pp.15-16.
14. K.M. Dallas, Trading Posts or Penal Colonies, Hobart, 1969, pp.88-90.
15. Bowen to King, September 20, 1803, Historical Records of New South Wales, V, v, p.224.

16. R.H.W. Reece, 'The Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales Before 1850, with Special Reference to the Gipps Administration, 1838-1846', M.A. Thesis, University of Queensland, 1969, p.29.
17. R.M. Hartwell, The Economic Development of Van Diemen's Land, 1820-1850, Melbourne, 1954, pp.14-15.
18. N.J.B. Plomley (ed.), Friendly Mission, Hobart, 1966, pp.25,45. See also map showing the distribution of Aboriginal man in Tasmania in R. Jones, 'The Demography of Hunters and Farmers in Tasmania', in D.J. Mulvaney and J. Golson (eds.), Aboriginal Man and Environment in Australia, Canberra, 1971, p.276.
19. The following economic evidence is mainly based on W.G. Rimmer, 'The Economic Growth of Van Diemen's Land, 1803-1821', in G.J. Abbot and N.B. Nairn (eds.), Economic Growth in Australia, 1788-1821, Melbourne, 1969, pp.327-351.
20. B.C. Fitzpatrick, British Imperialism and Australia, 1788-1833, Sydney, 1971, p.277.
21. Rimmer, op.cit., p.331.
22. Quoted in G. Barrington, The History of New South Wales, (2nd edn.), London, 1810.
23. M. Hookey (ed.), Bobby Knopwood and His Times, Hobart, 1929, pp.50,62,63.
24. J. West, The History of Tasmania, A.G.L. Shaw (ed.), Sydney, 1971, p.59.
25. Reports of Aboriginal attacks in the Gazette, November 28, 1818; April 17, December 18, 1819; January 23, July 16, July 23, August 6, October 29, December 24, 1824.
26. R. Dry, M. Hudspeth and T. Pearson to Aboriginal Committee, 1830 (C.S.O., 1/323/7578).
27. Clark to Aboriginal Committee, 1830, *ibid.*
28. Rimmer, op.cit., p.345.
29. Hartwell, op.cit., pp.194-199.
30. *ibid.*, pp.195-198.
31. Jones, op.cit., p.284.
32. See note 25 above.
33. Jones, op.cit., pp.274-275; Plomley, op.cit., pp.968-969.

34. Patterson to Banks, November 27, 1804 (Banks Papers - Brabourne Collection, Vol.4, Mitchell Library).
35. Phillip to Sydney, May 15, 1788, H.R.A., I, i, pp.24-28.
36. Reece, op.cit., p.116.
37. Quoted in D.J. Mulvaney, 'The Australian Aborigines, 1606-1929: Opinion and Fieldwork', Part 1 in Historical Studies, Selected Articles, 1964, p.13.
38. Collins to his father, March 23, 1791 (Collins Papers, Vol.1, Mitchell Library).
39. D. Collins, An Account of the English Colony of New South Wales, London, 1802.
40. ibid., pp.544-549, 559, 583-586, 599.
41. ibid., p.600.
42. ibid., pp.30,41,43.
43. Quoted in Barrington, op.cit., pp.522-523.
44. Plomley, op.cit., p.23.
45. K.M. Bowden, Captain James Kelly, Melbourne, 1964, pp.36-42.
46. Nobbs to Bedford, July 20, 1824 (Letters to Rev. W. Bedford, Mitchell Library).
47. Gazette, August 26, 1826.
48. Plomley, op.cit., p.24.
49. ibid., pp.23-24, 966.
50. C. Turnbull, Black War, Melbourne, 1948, pp.30-35.
51. ibid., p.34.
52. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, pp.53-54; H.R.A., 3, i, pp.242-243.
53. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, p.53.
54. ibid., pp.51,53.
55. Turnbull, op.cit., pp.34-35.
56. H.R.A., 3, i, p.238.
57. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, p.51.

58. West, op.cit., pp.270-271; H. Melville, The History of Van Diemen's Land from the Year 1824-1835, Inclusive, G. Malcannes (ed.), Sydney, 1959, pp.30-31, 57, 71-77; J. Bonwick, The Last of the Tasmanians, or The Black War Of Van Diemen's Land, London, 1870, Ch.III.
59. R. Hassall to W. Wilberforce, no date, draft. (Hassall Correspondence, Vol.4, Mitchell Library); R. Hassall to his father, March 17, 1819 (Rowland Hassall Papers, Mitchell Library).
60. Letter to Robinson from colonist, name indistinguishable, November 29, 1835 (Tasmanian Aborigines, Mitchell Library); Robinson's diary entry for August 24, 1831. Plomley, op.cit., pp.411-412.
61. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, pp.49-50.
62. C. Canteri, 'The Origins of Australian Social Banditry, Bushranging in Van Diemen's Land, 1805-1818', B. Litt. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1973, pp.225-227.
63. Paton to Arthur, October 15, 1824 (C.S.O., 1/2/15).
64. Plomley, op.cit., pp.26-27.
65. C.S.O., 1/323/7578.
66. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, p.52.
67. Reece, op.cit., pp.51-53.
68. Clark to Aboriginal Committee, 1830 (C.S.O., 1/323/7578); Clark to Arthur, November 5, 1826 (Arthur Papers, Vol.28, Mitchell Library).
69. Gazette, April 25, 1818.
70. A Wesleyan minister was not appointed to administer solely to the religious needs of the Tasmanian Aborigines as was the case in NSW. They received scant attention from the various Wesleyan ministers who directed their missionary endeavours towards the convicts.
71. Horton to Sec. Wesleyan Missionary Society, June 3, 1823 (Bonwick Missionary Transcripts, BT52, Mitchell Library).
72. ibid.
73. Gazette, September 22, 1821.
74. Richardson to Arthur, 1824 (C.S.O., 1/2/15).
75. Paton to Arthur, October 15, 1824 (C.S.O., 1/2/15).
76. Gazette, November 19, 1824.

CHAPTER 2

COLONIAL VIEWS OF CONFLICT AND ABORIGINAL CHARACTER, 1826-MARCH, 1830

Intensification of Conflict Between 1825 and 1830

The rapid influx of colonists continued at a greater rate in the years after 1825, thus accelerating the thrust of white settlement into Aboriginal tribal areas. In 1825 the colony's population stood at 14,992. By the end of the decade it had increased to 24,279.¹ During this period, the pattern of land ownership was firmly established - free settlers were the dominant landowners. In contrast to NSW, ex-convicts were not an important landowning element. This trend was due to the large numbers of arrivals of free immigrants with capital and was confirmed by the abolition of land grants to ex-convicts in 1827.²

In the middle of the decade, the northern settlement had been limited fairly much to an expansion to Epping Forest along the South Esk River, to beyond Ross along the Macquarie's banks. The southern settlement had progressed further with movements up the Derwent on to the Clyde River, along the Jordan River as far as Jericho and along the banks of the Coal River from Richmond.³ By the end of the decade, Prinsep, who travelled through the island in 1830, observed settlement had so extended that the whole route between Hobart and Launceston had been located:⁴ the northern and southern settlements had joined.

A feature of this expansion, important in the conflict between

Aborigines and settlers, was the location of settlement in areas that had previously supported large Aboriginal populations, that is, the river systems on the eastern side of the island.⁵ Not only did settlers occupy these areas, but the strong concentration of settlement⁶ undercut the Aboriginal hunting and food gathering economy. An expression of the dislocation of Aboriginal life was an increase in tribal in-fighting which resulted largely from tribal groups being unable to find sufficient food in their old hunting areas.⁷ Another result of the spread of white settlement during this period which had important consequences for inter-racial conflict was the re-orientation of Aborigines from their traditional sources of food to those of the Europeans. Throughout the latter 1820s and early 1830s, numerous colonists commented on the Aborigines' preference for the new food and their willingness to obtain it by forceful attacks on isolated stock huts if necessary.

Jorgen Jorgenson,⁸ a convict who had much contact with stock keepers, commented on the process early in 1830:

... the Aborigines had in a great measure changed the system of warfare and depredations... instead of resorting to their usual mode for obtaining subsistence, they had closed in upon the settlement, robbing the huts of flour and other provisions in very large quantities, thus in fact that food which was formerly disregarded by them had now become to them actual necessities of life, scarcely to be dispensed with.⁹

This change in food habits was not due solely to the Aborigines' lack of sufficient food from traditional sources. Annette Hamil-

ton's observations on the motivations of mainland Aborigines seeking European food can probably be applied to the VDL situation during this period:

The twin principles which kept Aboriginal society functioning were the need to find food and the desire to limit effort in doing so - vital elements in a hunting and gathering economy. When the news came that the whites had abundant, if strange, food, more than they could possibly eat was like news of Eden... Hence, just as they had always moved to the sources of food... so they moved to the whites.¹⁰

As in the pre-1825 period, factors apart from economic dispossession produced conflict. Foremost among these was the brutal actions of colonists towards Aborigines, particularly Aboriginal women. G.A. Robinson recorded the following conversation with a settler from Oatlands in 1829:

In the course of the conversation he [the settler] observed that the natives had been shamefully treated; that the stock-keepers had chained the females to their huts with bullock chains for the purpose of fornication.¹¹

The inhumanities towards the Aborigines in general were recorded by many contemporaries.¹² For example, a resident, B.W. Thomas, informed Arthur of the following incident:

... that the above named Chief (Monterpeelyarte) came to the hut of the stock-keeper unarmed, in a state of starvation, and begged for some bread. The stock-keeper came to the door with a loaf of bread in one hand, and a knife in the other, which he concealed behind his back, and with which he stabbed the native in the body, at the moment when he put out his hand to receive the bread.¹³

The activities of military and convict-based roving parties led to the murder of numerous Aborigines.¹⁴

By the end of the 1820s, the quality of Aboriginal resistance had changed. No longer did Aborigines attack solely for food or in response to an indiscriminate murder or an incident of brutality. Apparently the aim of many tribes became to rid the land of the whites. The first feature of this new type of warfare was the killing of large numbers of stock keepers. Thomas Anstey, Police Magistrate at Oatlands, recorded that in his area alone, twenty two inquests on persons killed by Aborigines were held between November 1826 and December 1830.¹⁵ The second feature was the killing of livestock. This had occurred earlier, but it now became more common.¹⁶ The action was not undertaken to obtain food, for the Aborigines did not care for mutton or beef, but to strike at the white economy. Added to this was the burning of white habitations,¹⁷ and the theft of guns.¹⁸ An official account of hostile actions by Aborigines around Great Swan Port over three months recorded that:

In August 1829, the Aborigines robbed Mr. Buxton's hut of the whole of the Men's Bedding - spear'd James Mage... and plundered his hut - In October following, the natives murdered one of Mr. Harte's assigned Servants - burnt Cullen's hut to the ground - Robb'd Mr. Gatehouse's hut of all the Bedding - Spear'd Mr. Castle, and plundered his hut - About the same time, they dangerously wounded with spearing, 3 Men, in Mr. Cotton's Service - and robbed Mr. Cotton - as also the hut occupied by Mr. Reid of the Bedding, and other Articles.¹⁹

Thus the twin objects of the Aborigines were apparent - to rid the land of the settlers, while at the same time obtaining the products of white society.

Such depredations provoked fear in the white farming community. With the frequency of attacks on property and life after 1827,

accompanied often by explicit statements by Aborigines of their hatred for the whites, many colonists realized that the Aborigines wanted to remove them from the land. The depredations could no longer be seen as motivated by revenge or the plundering escapades of a few savages. A war of resistance to the very presence of the colonists was in progress.

The response of colonists anticipated the feeling in NSW in the early 1840s that the Aborigines were planning a "native uprising".²⁰ In both cases, however, the real threat from Aboriginal resistance was not great. In NSW, white settlement in general was not endangered by the Aborigines, even in the outlying areas and the only serious material effects were the restrictions to expansion posed by the hazardous conditions in the Liverpool Plains and Portland Bay district.²¹ Similarly in VDL, agricultural expansion proceeded in the heat of conflict in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Some depressing effect on the economy would have been caused by the hesitancy of stock keepers to tend their animals far from the settled districts,²² but there is no evidence to suggest that this was widespread.

The growth of fear at the local level was evident in petitions of colonists and reports of Police Magistrates who were often landowners themselves, and thus reflected local farming opinion.²³ For example, in November 1827, twenty one inhabitants of farms on the banks of the Macquarie and Elizabeth Rivers, addressed a petition to Governor Arthur on the Aborigines issue. It followed a period of heightened conflict which, from this period until the early 1830s, was a feature of relations in the spring and

summer of every year in settled areas. The writers concluded that the murders committed lately were not the result of revenge, but of "a plan for the extirpation of the white inhabitants with whom they doubtless consider themselves at war".²⁴

Another petition of the same period was signed by sixty seven stock holders and inhabitants of the Launceston-Norfolk Plains area. The writers claimed that recent murders had

... created an alarm, which threatens to terminate in the abandonment of such property as is not in the immediate vicinity of an armed force, and has operated so strongly on the minds of their stock keepers, as to induce many of them to refuse to remain in charge of their flocks.²⁵

In October of the following year, Anstey of Oatlands compared the disposition of the Aborigines to the "cold malignity of a wicked spirit". The natives, he wrote,

... have uttered their war whoop and that it is to be a war of extermination, even of defenceless women and children.²⁶

In June, 1829, T.A. Lascelles, Police Magistrate at Richmond, an area particularly prone to attacks, had reported the death of another man in his district. The comments Lascelles made in his report revealed the consternation of colonists at the careful planning used in warfare by the Aborigines:

The Systematic Strategum by which their operations are conducted renders them every day more and more dangerous and I sadly fear that they may commit many more murders before they are disposed of.²⁷

In the same vein, Vicary, Police Magistrate at Bothwell, commented eight months later that

The knowledge the Natives have of the defenceless state of a house is really astonishing, as they have invariably made their attacks on the departure of the means of defence.²⁸

Feeling was running high in the Oatlands district during October, 1828, due to an attack on the female residents of Patrick Gough's house. The death of a white woman in warfare with the Aborigines was uncommon, while the raping of white women was unknown. In this incident, Anne Geary and Gough's child were killed, while his wife was severely wounded. The Courier concluded that the commission of these murders marked as they were by "heinousness and cowardice", together with the particulars of other attacks in the colony, indicated that the Aborigines "have formed a systematic organized plan for carrying on a war of extermination against the white inhabitants of the colony".²⁹ The murder of a white woman aroused doubt as to the human status of the Aborigines.

Settlers were particularly alarmed by the dramatic change in the Aborigines' disposition from timidity to boldness. In 1819, Wentworth had written of the safety of travel across the island.³⁰ The non-aggressive and shy character of the Aborigines had become a by-word in the colony. After 1825, however, settlers were forced to realize that the distinguishing feature of the Aborigines in warfare was their audacity.

Captain Clark of the Clyde district, a keen observer of inter-racial conflict, commented on this change to Governor Arthur. During February and the first few days of March, 1828, he reported a number of attacks,³¹ including one in which the Aborigines attempted to force some men out of a hut in order to rob it.³² The

Aborigines, he wrote, will only "be restrained by the prudence taken by the Settlers to have additional numbers of men in their huts who never stir without arms".³³ The spate of attacks climaxed on March 5, when two men on horseback were speared, one, Mr. Franks, fatally.³⁴ Clark noted that this was "the first instance of the native blacks daring to attack men on horseback, and a remarkable proof of their growing boldness".³⁵ By the end of 1829, the frequency of attacks led Clark to inform Arthur of the heightened audacity of the Aborigines and the consequent "increasing distress" felt by settlers: "Time was when the Aborigines would fly from the presence of an armed man, but now they will face even the Soldiers sent in pursuit of them..."³⁶

The spirit of resistance of the Aborigines during an attack was reported by Jorgenson after his travels through the Swanport area:

They had the audacity to threaten Mr. Meredith's men, and when they began to sing in defiance, the natives re-echoed their song in derision from the rocks, and told them they would come soon and take them all.³⁷

Alarm in the colony climaxed in 1830. This was due to the unparalleled frequency of attacks during this year and to the incursions of Aborigines into the farms of "respectable settlers". Before this year, stock keepers in isolated areas had borne the brunt of attacks. In mid-February, a boy was killed at Bagdad, Captain Clark's wheat was burnt,³⁸ and a settler, Mr. Brodie, was wounded by spears.³⁹

Similar occurrences, however, were reasonably common each year during the summer months. What really shook the colony was the

attack on the premises of a "respectable settler" on the river Clyde, J. Sherwin. Sherwin described the events of February 21 to the Aboriginal Committee two days later:

I was sitting in the front Room when the Servant called out 'Fire Fire - the Natives'... We then endeavoured to save the house, but seeing this was impossible we began to get what things we could from the house... Soon after two natives walked along side the Fences and set fire to them at every Twenty or thirty yards distance - then two other natives appeared on the rock on the other side of the River seeming to give directions whilst the other two still continued to communicate fire to the crops Fences and others, bringing the fire even to the River side. These two joined the others on the Rock and began to leap and use much of their language - 'Parrawa Parrawa - Go away you white b-g-rs. What business have you here'.⁴⁰

Although no white person was killed, the destruction of the property of an established and wealthy settler, together with the Aborigines' clear indication that their attack was motivated not by plunder, but by a desire to force Sherwin to cease his farming operations, created a feeling of intense alarm among the settlers. As Sherwin commented, "the Natives wish to have their lands to themselves; if something is not speedily done, no one can live in the bush".⁴¹

The Tasmanian, a journal previously lacking the alarmist approach of other colonial newspapers, felt the incident justified a reversal in its previous approach:

There seems to be something like a determination to destroy all before them. Extermination seems to be the only remedy. It is a dreadful one. But surely such a horrid calamity as has befallen Mr. Sherwin and his family, little short of ruin, requires some vigorous measures, or the general want of safety in the interior will become so apparent that the most injurious consequences to the colony will be the result.⁴²

The attack on Sherwin's premises and the buildup of incidents in the rest of the colony, happened to coincide with a tempering in Governor Arthur's attitude to the means most likely to achieve the settlement of conflict. In a Government Order issued on February 19, 1830, he advocated a conciliatory approach. Similarly, the Aboriginal Committee, a government body formed in 1829 to assist Arthur with the formation of policy on the Aborigines, suggested in a public notice, that efforts should be confined to non-violent means.⁴³ The gap between the opinions of the government and settlers on the necessary means for ending conflict thus widened. A writer to the Tasmanian summed up many settlers' attitude to the trend in policy:

Are the operations of the bush to be regulated by a Committee in Hobarton: what do they know about it? By the time the Committee is arguing, debating, bandying letters about from place to place, the white inhabitants are murdered, dwellings burnt to the ground, and terror and consternation spread over the country. The settlers in the country take quite a different view of the matter to what do the gentlemen in Hobart.⁴⁴

During the last week of February, settlers communicated their assessments of the conflict to the government. Captain Clark, who had toyed with the idea of a peaceful resolution of conflict, now concluded that "there is no profitability of holding converse with them". He maintained that relations in the Clyde district had reached such a level that whenever the Aborigines presented themselves, "they are immediately fired on and chased away like beasts of prey". To Clark, it now seemed there was no possibility of persuading the Aborigines to cease attacks until they were "convinced of our ability to punish them".⁴⁵ Similarly Vicary at Bothwell wrote that unless swift action was taken, "many of the

settlers must temporarily abandon their properties".⁴⁶

Shaken by the attack on Sherwin's premises, the citizens of the Clyde district drew up a petition to protest against Arthur's proposed conciliatory approach.⁴⁷ The writers stated that it was the "want of power on the part of the whites to compel submission" that had led to the Aborigines' audacious behaviour. The course of "friendship" proposed by Arthur, opened the possibility of the Aborigines marching "in formidable bodies... into the populous settlements with their firebrands in one hand and their unerring and deadly weapons of warfare in the other". Not only were the lives of some of the colonists in danger, but the Aborigines threatened "the extinction of the Colony itself by firing our Crops and Dwellings".⁴⁸

Views on Aboriginal Hostilities and Proposals for Action

Paralleling this growth of fear in the white farming community, colonists developed a new view of the nature of the Aboriginal hostility. Prior to 1824, the general opinion had been that the hostile disposition of the Aborigines originated in the inhumane treatment they received from the outcasts of white society - bushrangers and sealers. Even in the face of increasing hostility during 1825 and the first half of 1826, the injustices towards the Aborigines were stressed as the cause of conflict, and some articles even had a ring of the noble savage theme.⁴⁹

The Gazette and Colonial Times had completely changed their attitudes by the end of 1826. In an important editorial written on

November 11, 1826, the Gazette reported attacks on two stock huts in the Shannon, resulting in the death of one man. Blame for the incident was laid on the treacherous nature of the Aborigines:

The hand of these unthinking savages, once imbued in human blood, becomes hardened and eager for fresh aggressions; and though their enormities may now be continued to the outskirts of the settled districts, and the remote and secluded huts, their treacherous habits will, if not timely arrested, soon lead them to attack more populous neighbourhoods.

The Colonial Times echoed these sentiments in its weekly coverage of the Aborigines' attacks. As an anti-government journal, edited by Andrew Bent, it had a special interest in exaggerating the extent of the attacks and their degree of barbarity; for the government's lack of effectiveness in coping with the problem was thereby highlighted - "Is it not dreadful that our island settlers should be thus exposed to the fury of this now savage people? And is it not astonishing that some steps are not taken for their protection?"⁵⁰

According to another article in the Colonial Times, the murder of another white at Penny Creek, ~~stated~~ ^{was "enough to steel"} "the bosom against every feeling of humanity towards those black tribes". To solve the problem, they advocated instilling fear into the Aborigines. Black Tom, they wrote, must be "immediately gibberted".⁵¹ The paper added a further note of hysteria, destined to remove any remaining traces of sympathy for Aborigines, by a report of the death of a man near Launceston in December, 1826:

A more shocking spectacle was never seen. His body, especially his head, was literally beat to a mummy! His throat cut and his lower extremities cut off!! Indeed he was cut to

atoms. The outrages of these people are now as great as ever and have only been for a time diverted from their objects. The whites are and ever will be their detestation and no opportunity will remain unembraced whereby they may wreak their vengeance on them.⁵²

The Courier, of which the first issue appeared in October, 1827, simply reiterated the themes of the Gazette and Colonial Times. An indication of the departure from sympathy for the Aborigines' situation, was contained in the Courier of May 5, 1828:

... While we admit that the natives have in many instances been treated with extreme cruelty, we should at the same time bear in mind that such acts have ever been strongly prohibited by the law; let them not therefore be allowed to avenge themselves by an indiscriminate slaughter.⁵³

We are given a valuable insight into local settler views on the nature of Aboriginal hostility from three contemporary sources. The first is the response of fourteen leading settlers from various parts of the colony to some questions presented to them by the Aboriginal Committee. The second source is the Minutes to the Aboriginal Committee Report of March, 1830, while the third is the response by colonists to requests made at various times by the government and the Aboriginal Committee for information on the Aborigines.

The seventh of a series of questions given to fourteen settlers was worded as follows: "To what causes would you attribute the rise and progress of the hostility displayed by the Natives?"⁵⁴ The responses by the settlers to this question differed greatly:

Cox (Clarendon) saw mutual aggressions as the cause of hostility and argued that a habit of hostility had developed as a result;

Anstey (Oatlands) stated that he was not sure of the reason, but from his answers to other questions, he seemed to ascribe the Aborigines' disposition to their irrationally hostile and treacherous feelings towards the colonists;

Franks (Green Ponds) and Salmon (Ross) maintained that hostility was due to the continuation of the tradition of Tame Mobs. Salmon also attached importance to the lack of strong government action while Franks mentioned the Risdon incident;

Wood (Dennistown), Meredith (Great Swanport) and Hudspeth (Jerico) saw hostility as due to a desire for plunder;

Scott (Rubicon Rivulet), Dry (Launceston) and Pearson (Douglas Park) believed that the occupation of Aboriginal hunting grounds and/or the destruction of kangaroo, had caused the Aborigines to attack; and

Barnes (Launceston), Clark (Clyde), Curr (Circular Head) and Gray (Avoca) believed that the Aborigines had been provoked by various brutal actions.⁵⁵

Seven out of the fourteen settlers associated the rise of hostilities with the intrusion of white settlement into Aboriginal hunting grounds, the destruction of game or brutal actions by colonists. However, several points modified this seeming recognition of injustice. The blame for specific inhumane actions was placed on the outcasts of society and not on the respectable inhabitants. This scapegoating reduced the responsibility for the present hostilities from the settlers. It allowed evasion of the issue of the inevitable destructive effects on Aboriginal society of British settlement.

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, sealers and bushrangers had constituted this outgroup in the early period of settlement. With the occupation of remote grazing areas by assigned convicts during the 1820s, stock keepers became the main scapegoats.⁵⁶

To further shift the settlers' degree of responsibility, the Aborigines were often blamed for their unreasonable quest for revenge and their naturally "treacherous" disposition. To A. Davies of New Norfolk, this desire for revenge was intrinsic to the savage:

The passions of the savage are limited to supplying the necessary calls of nature and to revenge ... it (is) the almost only theme of their morality never to forgive an injury till it has been avenged, their enemies or such as have been injured by them can never sincerely intend any good in all their professions, whilst any one injurious action of their own should remain unrevenged.⁵⁷

The Aboriginal Committee, when giving its own opinion on the questions circulated among the fourteen settlers, supported this view of the Aborigines. The Committee referred to the "lurking spirit of cruelty and mischevious craft in the native character" and concluded that the

... acts of violence on the part of the Natives were to be considered not as retaliatory for any wrongs which they collectively or individually concerned themselves to have sustained, but as proceeding from a wanton and savage spirit inherent in them, and impelling them to acts of mischief and barbarity when it appeared probable that they might be perpetrated with impunity.⁵⁸

Settlers also absolved themselves from responsibility for the present state of hostilities by maintaining that the issue of "first aggressor" was now irrelevant as the colony was at war with the Aborigines. In their cultural chauvinism, they simply assumed that the land belonged to them and they were justified in forcibly dispossessing the Aborigines. As in NSW, it was only in

the mid-1830s that an ideological justification of any force or coherency for depriving the Aborigines of their land was used. The crudest of the settlers' arguments on this was presented by R.L. Murray, *currently editor of the Tasmanian and critical of Arthur*

Doubtless it was their home when our Colony was first planted on its shores, but Van Diemen's Land is now as much as legally and holily ours, as it was theirs. We enjoy it by a Charter as genuine as that by which our fathers possessed the land which we left... The question as to who was the aggressor is lost in the fact of our being at war... Our only and incumbent duty is to adopt the acknowledged mode of terminating hostilities with honour and satisfaction - to put forth our strength and subdue in mercy the ignoble foe to which we are opposed.⁵⁹

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In the early 1820s, when the injustices of the Aborigines' position had been stressed as the cause of hostility, the prohibition of the inhumane actions of bushrangers and sealers was stressed as the means to end Aboriginal hostility. However, the colonists' growing fear of the Aborigines and their depiction of them as inherently treacherous savages, encouraged a reversal in the methods advocated to overcome conflict. The colonial press, the former advocates of fair treatment of the Aborigines,⁶⁰ led the colony in support for extreme measures.

The Gazette was the first to broach the subject of removal in November, 1826. After a long diatribe on the inevitability of Aboriginal enmity, they advocated the removal of the hostile tribe, plus "one or two others". Such a policy was both "humane and judicious".⁶¹

It did not take the Colonial Times long to follow suit. On December 1, 1826, in an emotionally charged article, the paper also advocated removal, basing its support for the measure on a "realistic" approach to warfare:

We deeply deplore the situation of the settlers. With no remunerating price for their produce, they have just emerged from the perils of the bushrangers, which affected their property, and they are now exposed to the attacks of these natives, who aim at their lives. We make no pompous display of Philanthropy - we say unequivocally - SELF DEFENCE IS THE FIRST LAW OF NATURE. THE GOVERNMENT MUST REMOVE THE NATIVES - IF NOT, THEY WILL BE HUNTED DOWN LIKE WILD BEASTS AND DESTROYED!⁶²

At this stage only the removal of two hostile tribes around Oyster Bay and the Shannon was recommended.

With the formation of three new newspapers in the late 1820s,⁶³ justifications for removal became more involved. The Colonial Advocate, another of Bent's journals, continuing the emphasis of the Colonial Times, based its argument on the need for a drastic measure for the self-preservation of settlers. The paper claimed that the government's passivity was based on "a false notion of pity and humanity". It was absurd that the "sons of the greatest empire in the world give way before a body of savages".⁶⁴

A new element in the argument was added when the Colonial Times referred to the economic distress caused by the continued presence of the Aborigines. A conversation with a "very sensible man" from the interior was recorded:

... if the Natives were not speedily 'exterminated', meat would sell as low as one penny per pound. 'For', says he, 'while these black devils

continue to annoy our stock runs, spear our men as well as our cattle, it is useless to attempt to keep stock... the outrages and aggressions of the blacks have, in some measure, occasioned the glut of meat now in the market. We are compelled to sell our beasts, because we can get no men to mind them, for fear of the Natives!!!⁶⁵

The Courier also advocated removal, but it maintained that its support for the proposal was motivated by humane considerations. The situation was compared to NSW where to end conflict, "a proclamation amounting to a sort of martial law was promulgated". This had resulted in "dreadful" carnage. A far superior alternative

■ Was available in VDL:

... by the method we have pointed out of removing the evil, not only without bloodshed, but with interior prospects of lasting advantage and philanthropy, ...⁶⁶

At the beginning of 1829, they again returned to the theme of the philanthropic nature of removal, but this time in even more idealistic terms:

... a subsidiary colony of these Aborigines, will shortly be formed... and that if the adults cannot be taught, their offspring at least may acquire civilized habits... to the everlasting glory of the government and people, which now form the colony of Van Diemen's Land.⁶⁷

With the Tasmanian's advocacy of removal on March 28, 1828, the unity of the press seemed complete. Almost every week, articles appeared calling on the government to undertake this urgently needed action. However, in May of the same year, a surprising reversal of policy occurred in the Tasmanian:

... from recent information we are given to understand there are above three thousand Black inhabitants in the colony. Under these circumstances our former proposition is quite erroneous, being at variance with equity, and the law of nations, as they must to all intents and purposes be considered a people, and real proprietors of the land and therefore out of the power of the Government to remove them, except as prisoners of war or by treaty...⁶⁸

This was the first of a series of policy reversals that was to characterize the Tasmanian's treatment of the Aborigines' issue. The most probable reason for these swings in policy was Joseph Tice Gellibrand's⁶⁹ association with the journal. Although Gellibrand did not make his personal views public at this stage, in the debate on the Black Line in September, 1830, he was one of the few public figures who questioned the morality of colonists' actions against the Aborigines.

The change in the journal's Aboriginal policy was short-lived, for towards the end of the year, the paper discussed the possibility of an Aboriginal establishment on King or Kangaroo Island. A voluntary treaty between the Aborigines and the government would effect this. By the beginning of 1830, with the attack on Sherwin's premises, the paper advocated measures more extreme than removal:

In New South Wales, in Macquarie's time, about the year 1816, a horde of Aborigines committed some little devastation... At a distance at least one hundred miles from Sydney. The General ordered out every disposable man of the 46 Regiment... Captain Shaw's campaign, for such it was called, had the desired effect. He killed all before him, and rendered the whole Amphitheatre enclosed by the Black Natives perfectly safe and tranquil.

Such a measure here, has now become of absolute necessity.⁷⁰

To the residents of Hobart, removal seemed a simple solution. However, the difficulties involved were apparent to settlers who were faced with the day to day reality of Aboriginal hostility. Although some settlers agreed with the press on expatriation, others looked to different measures as long term solutions. O'Connor, a Land Commissioner and landholder of South Esk, maintained that it was impossible to collect the tribes together and confine them as the Aborigines had no confidence in the good intentions of the whites. Furthermore, such a proposal would be against their former mode of life. Instead, O'Connor advocated varied measures for ending conflict, which involved the prevention of the wanton destruction of kangaroo, the building of huts of shingles rather than grass to prevent burning and the provision of good muskets and ammunition to stock keepers.⁷¹

As the frequency of attacks increased, settlers looked to the government to provide more extensive measures to overcome conflict. Many quoted the experience of NSW where military drives against the Aborigines had been undertaken.⁷² In the Campbell Town area especially, the extent of hostility led to despair at the traditional methods of the authorities in capturing Aborigines who had committed depredations.

James Simpson, Police Magistrate for the area, upon receiving a petition from eighteen inhabitants of the area,⁷³ wrote to Arthur of the constant "appeals to me on the subject of the atrocities of the Blacks", and many times during 1828 informed Arthur of his difficulties.⁷⁴ On April 1, 1828, he reported the death of a

a convict, the spearing of another and the theft of the contents of a hut. His report was indicative of the pessimism in the countryside:

The proceedings of these wretches are very alarming; the stock keepers in a great many instances refusing to attend their charge...

I am really at a loss how to act when instances occur of these outrages, parties have invariably been in pursuit in a short a period as practicable - I trust some more extended means will be adopted to protect the settlement...⁷⁵

Towards the end of 1828, a means to cope with the problem seemed to be at hand - the employment of search and capture parties. With the adoption of martial law against the Aborigines on November 1, 1828, the introduction of these parties to the interior proceeded rapidly. The first, led by Gilbert Robertson, the Chief District Constable of Sorell, was composed of military and field police and aided by a captured Aborigine, Black Tom.⁷⁶ After a short search, Robertson arrived back in Hobart with four Aborigines⁷⁷ who were paraded before the Executive Council to "explain the cause of their grievances and aggressions against the White Inhabitants".⁷⁸

About the same time, Anstey, despairing of all other methods, suggested the use of convicts formed into parties to pursue Aborigines. In mid-November he gave further details of his plan. He maintained that with convict roving parties "we could get great numbers of them into our hands in month or two".⁷⁹ However, Anstey despaired of this being the complete solution, for "to rid the Country of the Scourge, a considerable number of Troops will be required".⁸⁰

During the whole of 1829, roving parties, some composed of convicts and others of the military, scoured the bush for Aborigines. Anstey exercised general control over the convict parties after May, 1829. He organized them into six groups, half of which were led by Robertson and half by Jorgenson. Many convicts volunteered their services for they saw the pursuit of Aborigines as a way to shorten their sentences or gain rewards.⁸¹ John Batman, a settler in the north east, highlighted the commercial nature of the roving parties by offering his services in June, 1829, for considerable remuneration.⁸² Batman was accepted to lead a roving party which retained some independence from Anstey.⁸³

Both the military and convict based roving parties were unsuccessful in their efforts. Apart from a few isolated captures, including Robertson's initial capture of four, and two successes by Batman in late 1829, the parties spent many months in the bush with the only result being an increase in the numbers of Aborigines killed, this time by official parties. A typical communication was sent in by the Police Magistrate at Richmond, reporting on the routing of a tribe at Prosser Plains:

... it was the particular object of this non-commissioned officer to capture... without the loss of life, but as they fled on the approach of the Party, I am [sorry] to state that it is supposed eight or ten of the natives were severely wounded.⁸⁴

Similar shootings were reported by Batman⁸⁵ and by Tyrell, the leader of a small party.⁸⁶

The lack of success of the roving parties was often blamed on the lack of exertion of their participants. Hobbs thus reported to the

Aboriginal Committee that Robertson "never exerted himself in pursuit of the Natives; ... he has been more employed in looking for grants of land than the Natives".⁸⁷ As the months progressed, however, it became obvious that while determination on the part of some parties was lacking, the Aborigines' superior knowledge of the bush spelt doom for the parties.

On December 15, 1829, Anstey had to report that his scheme had failed.⁸⁸ He was unable to suggest an alternative, and since another scheme did not present itself, the roving parties continued. The leaders were exhorted by Anstey to step up activities and were threatened with the disbandment of the parties if no results were produced.⁸⁹ In exasperation at Jorgenson's failure, Anstey ordered him "to remain in the Bush, and never to make his appearance, until he has fallen in with and captured a Mob of Natives".⁹⁰ However, even this did not produce the desired result.

With the obvious failure of the roving parties by the end of 1829, settlers looked to other means to end conflict. Again we are given an insight into settler opinion on this by the responses to questions circulated among fourteen settlers by the Aboriginal Committee in February, 1830. As mentioned before, seven of these settlers saw colonist intrusion on to hunting grounds, the destruction of kangaroo and inhumane actions towards Aborigines as the cause of conflict. The measures proposed by these settlers to end hostilities were only slightly more moderate than those proposed by the other seven settlers who blamed hostilities entirely on the Aborigines.

Thus, Barnes suggested conciliatory measures, but opted for capture if these failed. Only Gray continued his suggestions to conciliation. The five others favoured various coercive measures, ranging from the continued use of military parties to capture and remove. Of these five, Pearson and Curr considered annihilation. Pearson decided it was too difficult to effect and therefore favoured capture. Curr, while deploring the possibility, thought it likely to occur. Of the seven other settlers, two favoured annihilation, three removal and two simply stated in general terms, the need for firm action.⁹¹

Settlers throughout the colony favoured these types of suggestions. Other proposals were the formation of large cordons of soldiers and civilians to sweep across the island capturing or killing Aborigines,⁹² the offering of rewards for Aborigines killed or captured,⁹³ the use of flour impregnated with poison and the use of bloodhounds for capture.⁹⁴

Colonists often upheld the myth that the British led Europe in humane treatment for indigenous peoples of the New World. Many thought that in VDL this reputation should not be tarnished. Thus there was a certain embarrassment felt and a need to justify proposals usually reserved for animals. O'Connor's comments exemplified this:

History furnishes us with the means which the merciless Spaniards took to destroy the Aborigines of South America... the discussion and final solution of the Slave Trade has taught us to look upon all mankind as 'Friends and Brothers'. But, it is said by all Classes of Settlers, can we remain a Colony where we are liable every moment to be massacred by a set of Savages, whom we have never offended...

Can we live in a wilderness surrounded by
Wretches who watch every opportunity and who
take delight in shedding our blood?⁹⁵

Similarly, Rowcroft, when advocating a reward of one or two pounds for every Aborigine captured, admitted that there was "something repulsive at first, in offering a Reward for the capture of the unfortunate beings".⁹⁶ When writing of using bloodhounds, Franks of Greenponds, admitted that the proposition appeared "frightful on paper" and "repugnant to British feeling". However, he claimed that the Tasmanian Aborigines' particular "obduracy and sanguinary temper", together with their barbaric killings, placed them outside normal humane considerations.⁹⁷

If the settlers and the press differed over the most effective means of dealing with the Aborigines, they were unanimous in denouncing the government's repeated public statements on the need for conciliation and the possibility of gradual "civilization". Many felt that this policy was not only ineffective, but adding fuel to the fire. A memorial of sixty seven inhabitants to Arthur of November, 1827, expressed this view. After detailing the alarm felt by settlers and the numbers of murders "perpetuated by them with impunity", they wrote of the dangers implicit in Arthur's approach:

... all attempts to conciliate and civilize the Savages, have only tended to render them more daring and Systematic in their attacks, as well as desirous of plunder...⁹⁸

In their criticisms of government policy, the press and settlers invoked a view of the Aborigines as too savage to be treated as rational human beings. When commenting on the April, 1828

Proclamation which aimed to keep Aborigines out of the settled districts, the Colonial Advocate claimed that the

... Natives will never be made to understand the nature of a negotiation. It will be quite and morally impossible to bring them to enter treaties. They are too ignorant - too truly barbarous to understand anything but force,...⁹⁹

The refusal of Aborigines who had been reared by settlers to conform to white society, confirmed the view that the Aborigines were irreclaimable. These Aborigines usually returned to their tribes and often became instigators of anti-settler activity. This convinced many colonists that the Aborigines possessed a savage instinct that could not be tamed, even after extensive contact with civilized whites. Kelly informed the Aboriginal Committee that

Our Natives are not susceptible to civilization; their children even, if taken away when infants, would return to their parents, like wild ducks when they grew up.¹⁰⁰

Murray wrote that civilization offered to the Aborigines was "as pearls thrown before a swine".¹⁰¹ O'Connor quoted the example of Black Tom, an Aborigine reared by Mrs. Birch:

He, it was who last year murdered Mr. Simpson's man (Guinea) while in the act of giving him and his Companions, Bread... How then is it possible to conciliate those who become more brutal in proportion to the kindness shown? Nothing but fear operates in such savages.¹⁰²

The Gazette presented the most condemnatory view of all. The following was one of the few coherent racist statements of this period:

The springs of gratitude, the claim of association and interchange of mutual good offices, so strong in the breasts of all other men seem absent and entirely unknown in these wandering miserable people. So fixed does their wretched doom appear, and so fruitless hitherto have been all attempts to ameliorate their condition, that they seem to have been decreed by Providence to remain for ever at the very bottom of the scale of humanity. Wherever the race is extended, the same inevitable degeneration has been seen to attach to them.¹⁰³

* * * *

Assessments of Aboriginal Character

Colonists' comments on the VDL Aborigines were remarkable for their superficiality. This was due partly to the limited contact between settlers and Aborigines in their natural state. Also, many commentators were not settlers at all and therefore had no access to first hand information. They relied on rumour for their data.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the widespread belief that Aboriginal life was scarcely worthy of inquiry, led to limited investigation. The observations that were made, revealed cultural chauvinism and racism. The Great Chain of Being, a concept biased towards the superiority of western culture, was a pervasive influence on the colonists' mind, leading to the linking of Aborigines with animals.

Writers who were convinced of the Aborigines' position as near to the bottom of a supposed "scale of humanity", placed emphasis on the Aborigines' lack of sophisticated weaponry and material possessions. Not only did they lag behind the Aborigines of NSW, but all other "savage" races. Thus Captain Betts, in his chapter on the Aborigines, concluded that:

From all that we have been able to learn regarding them, they do not appear to have made the slightest approach, even to the simplest arts known among uncivilized savages, with the exception of making their spears, and waddies or clubs.¹⁰⁵

Similarly a settler, Browni, wrote that if the Tasmanian Aborigines were compared with any other "savages", they were found "wretchedly deficient, even in the construction of their huts, weapons, etc. ...".¹⁰⁶

Added to this lack of sophistication in material life, the Aborigines were viewed as intellectually poverty stricken, and existing in a cultural void. A common belief was that the Aborigines' religious life consisted of a few vague notions of bad spirits: "Their religion, if I may call it so, is more actuated by fear of an Evil Spirit than the love of a Benevolent or good one..."¹⁰⁷ Breton even asserted that they "do not appear to have any rites or ceremonies, religious or otherwise".¹⁰⁸ Social relationships were not enquired into and the view of Aboriginal life generally was one of aimless wandering, combined with daily searches for food.¹⁰⁹

To add to the unattractive image of the Aborigines, their physical appearance was always described unfavourably. Widowson's comments were typical:

The features of these people are anything but pleasing: a large flat nose, with immense nostrils; lips particularly thick; a wide mouth, with a tolerably good set of teeth; the hair long and woolly, which, as if to confer additional beauty, is besmeared with red clay (similar to our red ochre) and grease. The limbs of these people are badly proportioned; the women appear to be better formed than the men.¹¹⁰

The historian, Christine Bolt, when looking at British attitudes to non-Europeans in the second half of the nineteenth century, has commented that the observations made were more revealing of the British themselves than of the people observed.¹¹¹ This applied particularly to VDL when colonists looked at Aboriginal attitudes to labour. Steeped in the work ethic of their own society, they were surprised at the Aborigines' desire to limit their labour to provide only a subsistence diet. The conclusion drawn was that this resulted from a basic inferiority on the Aborigines' part. Their bush skill was not admired, but seen as a compensation for deficiencies in other areas. Henderson made the following comments on the Aborigines of both VDL and NSW:

Owing to the same cause that the blind or deaf evince a superior degree of sensibility in their remaining faculties, the natives display a particular acuteness, wherever they are obliged to exert themselves;... They will thread their way through all the intricacies of the forest; they will readily detect the haunts of their usual gains;... but they are at the same time, fickle, wayward, and indolent.¹¹²

This tendency to turn what could be a positive feature of Aboriginal life, even to nineteenth century Europeans, into a further indication of savagery was apparent in Breton's comments on the Aborigines' refusal to assume an unfair advantage in a fight.

"This fairness", he wrote, "reminds me of the orang-outang on the banks of the Ganges which... will present a native with a stick and compel him to fight."

Two particular features of Aboriginal life lowered them to the level of animals in the colonists' eyes. One was a supposed lack

of human bonds among Aborigines, especially between Aboriginal mothers and their children. Time and time again the example was used where mothers, it was claimed, preferred to suckle puppies to their own children.¹¹⁴

Widowson concluded that the parents were so careless that boys grew up with "the loss of a toe or two, having, when infants, been dropped into the fire by the mother".¹¹⁵ Even sexually the Aborigines were believed deficient,¹¹⁶ a view somewhat surprising since black people were usually portrayed as possessing extraordinary sexual urges in contemporary literature.

The influence of this view of the Aborigines was so pervasive that the few writers sympathetic to the Aborigines, often needed to assert that the Aborigines possessed a minimum level of human feeling and emotion. Thus, Rev. William Bedford wrote to Arthur that he felt convinced that "many of this unhappy race, are capable of gratitude, attachments and affections".¹¹⁷ A colonist who witnessed an Aborigine expressing sorrow over the grave of a countryman, thought this an amazing event, worthy of a letter to the press.¹¹⁸

The second feature of Aboriginal life linking the Aborigines with animals in the colonists' eyes, was their day to day living habits. Widowson again provides a typical comment, this time on eating habits:

The manner of cooking their victuals, is by throwing it on the fire, merely to singe the hair; they eat voraciously, and are very little removed from the brute creation as to choice of food; entrails etc. sharing the same change as the choicest parts.¹¹⁹

Browni's account was even more condemnatory:

All the best accounts I have been able to get agree in fixing the general course of living among natives, as one continued series of gluttony and sloth - ... They are the most filthy beings, in their wild state, imaginable - nothing can be much more disgusting, than to come upon a rendezvous which they have recently left - appearances warrant the idea that they will not leave their fires, even to answer the calls of nature!¹²⁰

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 2

1. Hartwell, op.cit., p.68.
2. Fitzpatrick, op.cit., p.280.
3. Hartwell, op.cit., p.59.
4. ibid.
5. The exception to this was the limited farming operations of the VDL Company in the north west.
6. Hartwell, op.cit., p.53.
7. Robertson to Arthur, November 17, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/331/7578).
8. See Plomley, op.cit., p.1034.
9. Jorgenson to Anstey, February 24, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/320/7578).
10. A. Hamilton, 'Blacks and Whites: The Relationships of Change', in Arena, 30, 1972, p.14.
11. Robinson's diary entry for December 14, 1829; Plomley, op.cit., p.90.
12. For example, W.H. Breton, Excursions in New South Wales, Western Australia and Van Diemen's Land, London, 1833, p.400.
13. Thomas to Colonial Secretary, July 1, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
14. See below, p.88^{ff}
15. C.S.O. 1/316/7578.
16. See for example, 'Report of Murders and Depredations Committed by the Aborigines in the Police District of Norfolk Plains', Curtain (?) to Colonial Secretary, March 22, 1828; Abbots to Colonial Secretary, November 12, 1827 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
17. Harte to Colonial Secretary, March 20, 1828; Lane to Colonial Secretary, April 28, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
18. Plomley, op.cit., pp.510-511, 535,553; Police Magistrate, Norfolk Plains to Colonial Secretary, November 12, 1827 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
19. 'Report of Murders and Depredations Committed by the Aborigines in the Great Swanport District'. Emphasis added (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).

20. Reece, op.cit., p.228.
21. *ibid.*
22. See for example, Aubin to Arthur, November 26, 1827 (Arthur Papers, Vol.10).
23. For example, Captain Clark, Police Magistrate at Clyde, owned property at Bothwell and Green Ponds, Thomas Anstey, Police Magistrate at Oatlands, owned property at Oatlands and James Simpson, Police Magistrate at Campbell Town, owned property at Little Swanport.
24. November 20, 1827 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
25. November 24, 1827; also Simpson to Colonial Secretary, April 1, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
26. Anstey to Arthur, October, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
27. Lascelles to Colonial Secretary, June 10, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
28. Vicary to Colonial Secretary, February 12, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
29. Courier, October 18, 1828.
30. W.C. Wentworth, A Statistical, Historical and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales, London, 1819, p.160.
31. Clark to Colonial Secretary, February 11, 25, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
32. Clark to Colonial Secretary, March 2, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
33. Clark to Colonial Secretary, February 25, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
34. Clark to Colonial Secretary, March 5, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
35. Clark to Colonial Secretary, March 10, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
36. Clark to Colonial Secretary, November 2, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
37. Jorgenson to Anstey, July 29, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/320/7578).
38. Tasmanian, February 26, 1830.
39. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, p.47.
40. Aboriginal Committee minutes, February 23, 1830.
41. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, p.47.
42. Tasmanian, February 26, 1830.

43. See Chapter 3 for details of government policy.
44. Tasmanian, February 26, 1830.
45. Clark to Colonial Secretary, February 22, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
46. Vicary to Colonial Secretary, February 23, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
47. February 27, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
48. *ibid.*
49. Gazette, April 8, 1825; Colonial Times, May 5, 1826.
50. Colonial Times, November 17, 1826.
51. *ibid.*
52. *ibid.*, December 29, 1826.
53. Courier, May 5, 1828.
54. Aboriginal Committee minutes, March 2, 1830.
55. C.S.O. 1/323/7578.
56. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, p.5; Clark to Aboriginal Committee, 1830; Gray to Aboriginal Committee, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
57. Davies to Aboriginal Committee, February 3, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
58. Aboriginal Committee minutes, March 2, 1830. Emphasis in original. This view was repeated in the Committee's major report of March, 1830. Military Operations, pp.42-46.
59. Murray to Aboriginal Committee, March 16, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
60. Gazette, April 8, 1825.
61. *ibid.*, November 11. 1826.
62. Colonial Times, December 1, 1826.
63. Tasmanian (1827), Courier (1827), Colonial Advocate (1828).
64. Colonial Advocate, May 1, 1828.
65. *ibid.* Emphasis in original.
66. Courier, April 12, 1828.

67. *ibid.*, January 24, 1829.
68. Tasmanian, May 30, 1828.
69. Joseph Tice Gellibrand (1786-1837) arrived in VDL in March, 1824, and was sworn in as the colony's Attorney General on May 7, 1824. Due to his association with Arthur's political opponents, particularly the newspaper editor, R.L. Murray, and his refusal to co-operate with Arthur in legal areas, he was dismissed from office in 1826. Gellibrand continued a legal practice in Hobart until he left for Port Phillip where he was killed by Aborigines near Geelong in 1837.
70. Tasmanian, February 26, 1830.
71. O'Connor to Parramore, December 11, 1827 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
72. Aubin to Arthur, November 26, 1827 (Arthur Papers, Vol. 10).
73. C.S.O. 1/170/4072.
74. *ibid.* (No date given.); Simpson to Colonial Secretary, March 18, April 1, June 22, August 26, September 2,4, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
75. April 1, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
76. This seems to have been authorized by Arthur. See Arthur to Lascelles, October 31, 1828 (Lieutenant-Governor's Letter Book, 1826-1829, Tasmanian State Archives).
77. Robertson to Arthur, November 17, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/331/7578).
78. Executive Council minutes, November 19, 1828.
79. Anstey to Colonial Secretary, November 14, 1828 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
80. *ibid.*
81. Anstey to Arthur, May 20, 1829 (Arthur Papers, Vol.20); C.S.O. 1/328/7578; C.S.O. 1/321/7578.
82. Batman to Colonial Secretary, June 16, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/321/7578).
83. *ibid.*, July 8, 1829.
84. Lascelles to Colonial Secretary, June 16, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/321/7578).
85. Batman to Anstey, August 7, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).

86. Jorgenson to Anstey, January 18, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/320/7578).
87. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, p.51. See also correspondence between Anstey, Jorgenson and Robertson (C.S.O. 1/320,331/7578) (Arthur Papers, Vols.28,50).
88. Anstey to Colonial Secretary, December 15, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/320/7578).
89. Jorgenson to Anstey, December 21, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/320/7578).
90. Anstey's minute on *ibid.*, February 18, 1830.
91. C.S.O. 1/323/7578.
92. Jorgenson to Anstey, June 18, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/320/7578).
93. Rowcroft to Aboriginal Committee, February 22, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/320/7578).
94. Simmons to Bedford, February 21, 1830; Philohistoricus to Aboriginal Committee, February 20, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578); Colonial Times, February 26, March 19, 1830; Courier, March 13, 1830.
95. O'Connor to Parramore, December 11, 1827 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
96. Rowcroft to Aboriginal Committee, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
97. Franks to Aboriginal Committee, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
98. November 24, 1827 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
99. Colonial Advocate, May 1, 1828; Courier, April 12, 1828.
100. Minutes of Evidence, February-March, 1830, p.50.
101. Murray to Aboriginal Committee, March 16, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
102. O'Connor to Aboriginal Committee, December 11, 1827 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
103. Gazette, November 11, 1826.
104. Some commentators were not even residents of VDL, e.g. T. Betts, An Account of the Colony of Van Diemen's Land, Calcutta, 1830; H. Widowson, Present State of Van Diemen's Land, 1829; Henderson, *op.cit.*
105. T. Betts, *op.cit.*, p.95.
106. Browni to Aboriginal Committee, February 28, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).

107. *ibid.*
108. Breton, *op.cit.*, p.398.
109. H. Widowson, *op.cit.*, pp.189-190; Betts, *op.cit.*, pp. 189-190.
110. *ibid.*
111. C. Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race, London, 1971, 'Conclusion'.
112. Henderson, *op.cit.*, p.405.
113. Breton, *op.cit.*, p.405.
114. Widowson, *op.cit.*, p.190; Betts, *op.cit.*, p.96.
115. Widowson, *op.cit.*, p.190.
116. Browni to Aboriginal Committee, February 28, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
117. Bedford to Arthur, November 26, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).
118. Tasmanian, June 25, 1830.
119. Widowson, *op.cit.*, p.190.
120. Browni to Aboriginal Committee, February 28, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578).

CHAPTER 3

GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARDS THE ABORIGINES, 1825-MARCH, 1830

In NSW during the heat of conflict in the late 1830s and early 1840s, humanitarian pressure from local and British sources was a considerable influence on government policy. It led to the adoption of government policies that were at variance with settler opinion. A striking feature of colonial opinion on the Aborigines in VDL was the weakness of "improvement" and conciliation themes. In contrast to NSW, a few letters to the press and Governor Arthur, together with the work of George Augustus Robinson, were the only evidence that colonists in VDL took an interest in the Aborigines that was not directed solely to the settlers' safety. There was thus little real pressure on the government to adopt a conciliatory stance.

Two of the reasons for this difference have already been hinted at - the greater intensity of conflict in VDL and its different timing. Thus the heightened danger from Aborigines in VDL did not dispose colonists to view conciliation favourably. Fear and hysteria engendered by fierce conflict led colonists to negative views on the chances of "civilizing" the Aborigines. Prior to the intensification of conflict in NSW in the late 1830s, changes had occurred in British attitudes towards the indigenous inhabitants of colonial lands. Once slavery was abolished in British colonies in 1833, attention was turned towards alleviating the worst effects of colonization on the other native peoples. This engendered a wave of humanitarian sentiment in the Australian colonies which led to the establishment of a strong Aboriginal lobby in NSW during the heat of conflict during the late 1830s. Conflict in VDL occurred on a large scale before this change of opinion and thus the colony missed the effects of this humanitarian upsurge when hostility was at its height. Although there was some awareness of a supposed British tradition

of enlightened treatment of native people (compared with the barbarous Spaniards) this was insignificant in countering the opposing trends of harsh and aggressive attitudes towards the Aborigines.

Another reason for the weakness of pro-Aboriginal sentiment was the neglect of the smaller colony by the missionary societies. Already overworked in NSW, the fledgling societies felt that the small numbers of Aborigines did not justify the employment of a missionary solely for the needs of the Tasmanian Aborigines.¹

Lastly, the history of contact between Aborigines and colonists differed in VDL and NSW in ways that affected future attitudes. In the latter colony, although "civilizing" efforts had been marked by a lack of success,² there had been at least a significant amount of non-hostile and often friendly contact in the years since settlement by whites. To sympathetic observers, there seemed a good chance of eventually absorbing the Aborigines into colonial society by civilizing them, or at least living with them on peaceful terms. In VDL, up till 1825, the Aborigines were very much an unknown factor. Except for a short period when a group lived on the outskirts of Hobart, the town's inhabitants' contact with them was extremely limited. Edward Curr's book on the colony did not even mention their existence.³ In the interior there was certainly more contact, but it was generally of a spasmodic nature and moreover, it was not likely that these outback settlers would become advocates of civilization and conciliation. When conflict began in earnest after 1826, this tradition of separation had its effects for it became very easy to treat every Aborigine as an enemy, beyond normal human considerations, particularly when it could be

pointed out that when contact had occurred in the rearing of Aboriginal children by whites, the invariable result was future hostility.

The few criticisms that were made of the treatment of Aborigines in VDL were of a predictable nature. It was claimed that not only had the Aborigines lost their land, but they had also been personally assaulted and murdered, their women had been raped and their children abducted. The Aborigine, it was held, had doubly suffered, for he had not received any compensatory benefits which the British could be expected to provide - "those comforts which usually accompany civilization".⁴ To this press correspondent, their treatment was so shameful as to compare unfavourably with that of slaves:

How would our conscientious English principles of liberty shudder, were an order in Council to be published proclaiming all natives slaves to their captors; but I appeal to Your Excellency would it not be far better for the Aborigines; there would then be a value stamped on the poor creatures, the merchants would purchase them for exportation but as it is they are only considered as vermin which everyone is bound to destroy.⁵

Although unanimous in their criticism of treatment, Aboriginal sympathizers differed about the best means of remedying the current situation. Significantly, there was a difference of opinion on the advisability of removal. Some opposed the idea on practical grounds,⁶ but others had a moral objection. William Penn, a Tasmanian Quaker who became a frequent correspondent on the subject, expressed his views to the Tasmanian in 1828:

...thou art verily in great error when thou urgest the compulsory removal of the black natives from this island... That the black natives of Van Diemen's Land are revengeful is not to be wondered at, for revenge is nothing more than the characteristic of all uncivilized people, deprived of the advantages of religion and morality; they are, nevertheless, protected by the laws of nations, from being transported to another country by the Colonial Government. Besides they are by no means intractable in their nature.⁷

Another opponent of removal was Robert Melrose Ayton. The adult Aborigines, he claimed, "will never willingly leave their native deserts". To do so would be "unnatural", similar to the British leaving their homes to "run wild in the bush". Ayton's submission to the Aboriginal Committee in March, 1830, containing these views was virtually the only sympathetic paper presented by a settler. His cultural bias was evident however, when he ended by suggesting that "young Aborigines may be brought in and educated".⁸ Although ties to the soil might be great among the Aborigines, family attachments were insignificant.

Generally those who were critical of the treatment of the Aborigines did not oppose the idea of removal. Their differences with the majority lay in the methods advocated to effect removal and in a greater emphasis placed on the scheme's possibilities for providing positive benefits for the Aborigines.

Two colonists of some importance who gave their opinions on the nature of the proposed establishment for captured Aborigines, were the colony's chaplain, Reverend William Bedford, and the Surveyor-General, George Frankland. Rev. William Bedford took up the question in late 1829, when the future of the Bruny Island

Aboriginal Establishment was under examination. He believed that some Aborigines could be conciliated in the bush and thus it was not necessary to expatriate the entire population. The intractable ones could be placed on Bruny Island in buildings surrounded by a fence to prevent escape. Field police stationed on the island could add to security and also prevent "improper communication with whites". To induce the Aborigines to remain and look upon the Establishment favourably, he suggested supplying them with tea and sugar. He explained his overall view for the future of the Establishment:

It is hoped that by these means, and the mild enforcement of such regulations, as from time to time, may appear necessary... The Aborigines may be taught to value the assistance afforded them and ultimately, be desirous of labouring to supply themselves, in whole, or in part, with those comforts, of which they experience the value.¹⁰

Frankland's ideas on the future Establishment were more generalized. He rejected the view that the Aborigines should be removed to an island where they could maintain themselves according to their traditional hunting and feeding patterns:

To turn them loose in a strange country without regard to their hostile feelings towards each other, and without any superior control to regulate their actions would be at once inhuman and impolitic.¹¹

Instead, he proposed that the Aborigines should be rationed with European food on an island where hunting was impossible. His optimistic prognosis for the future of the settlement of expatriated Aborigines was, no doubt, influential in Arthur's final

decision in favour of removal:

... the Natives would necessarily become totally dependent on the Europeans and - removed from the atrocities of Convicts - they would cease to be stimulated by revenge... In two years there is room to hope that they could be induced to cultivate enough ground to maintain themselves, and a Missionary Establishment... would undoubtedly lead to the most happy results.¹²

Thus expatriation, the idea that in 1825 had been proposed by Thomas Anstey as a radical step, not possibly entertained by a responsible Governor, was, by 1829, supported by the mildest of colonists.

From Conciliation to Terror: Government Policy, 1824-1829

Five weeks after becoming Lieutenant-Governor of VDL, Arthur issued his first statement to the colony on the Aborigines. In this Proclamation of June 23, 1824, Arthur echoed the instructions of all previous Governors of NSW and VDL:

... to support and encourage all means which may tend to conciliate and civilize the Natives of the island, and to forbid and prevent, and when perpetrated, to punish any ill-treatment towards them.¹³

The Aborigines were to be "under the protection of the same laws which protect settlers", and if any person acted against an Aborigine in violation of these laws, he was to be punished as though he had committed a crime against a settler.¹⁴

Arthur's evident interest in the Aborigines - this was the first of all his Proclamations - derived only partly from his instruc-

tions which stressed the government's duty to uphold the rights of the Aborigines as British subjects. During his service as Governor of Honduras, between the years 1814 and 1822, he was concerned about treatment of slaves and the connivance of magistrates with slave-owners to continue illegal practices.¹⁵ No doubt at the beginning of his term in VDL he saw a parallel in the treatment of slaves in Honduras and the colonists' disregard for the Tasmanian Aborigines' well-being. The visit of a group of 64 Aborigines to Hobart in 1824, gave Arthur the opportunity to express his friendly intentions. The Gazette reported that "No sooner was their approach discovered, than our humane Lt.-Governor advanced to meet and welcome them".¹⁶ Food and blankets were given in large quantities and the market place was set up for their accommodation.

The history of those friendly overtures was shortlived. During the first two years of Arthur's administration, three Aborigines were executed when found guilty of murder,¹⁷ while the perpetration of acts of "incredible brutality" against some friendly female Aborigines was punished with only 25 lashes.¹⁸ At no time during his administration did a white suffer the death penalty for the murder of an Aborigine, though there was opportunity to dispense equitable justice. Arthur's public statements and dispatches continued for many years to stress humane treatment of Aborigines and the need for equal legal treatment for Aborigines and settlers. However, Arthur clearly had no intention of prosecuting whites. His rationale for such public statements was to verbally intimidate. *He hoped* this would reduce wanton violence and thereby lessen Aboriginal retaliatory attacks.

■

In the fields of "civilization" and religious conversion, Arthur's attempts were also half-hearted. Although active in attempting to form an institution for the "civilization and instruction" of Aborigines in late 1824,¹⁹ Arthur's pessimism on the possibilities of Aborigines acquiring a sufficiently civilized life style to become members of a European society was soon apparent. Thus, in a Government notice of September 13, 1826, he informed colonists that the observance of humane treatment towards the Aborigines was only to lessen aggression and render them "comparatively harmless", for "at present it may be found difficult, and perhaps impracticable to improve their moral condition".²⁰ He held the view common among colonists, that the failure of Aborigines reared by whites to continue to conform to the standards of European society "augers ill for any endeavour to ~~construct~~ ^{instruct} these abject beings".²¹ His letter of April, 1828, requesting Archdeacon Scott of NSW to advise him on "any measures which might be considered best calculated to ameliorate their condition", was simply a formality. Serious consideration of the issue by Scott was immediately dampened by Arthur's comment on the

■ ... extreme difficulty, of which you are aware of any undertaking intended for the benefit of the Aborigines of this Island, arising from their hostility to the white inhabitants, as well as from their lamentable state of ignorance.²²

In the face of the building up of hostilities in the interior between 1826 and 1828, Arthur's strategies to combat the Aborigines hardened. Gradually the view of the Aborigines as a wronged race was superseded by their depiction as a horde of irrational savages who, by their hostile bearing, had forfeited

rights to humane consideration. In this progression of attitudes, Arthur followed the drift of colonial opinion, and the history of his Aboriginal policy reveals the eventual adoption of the central tenets of the anti-Aboriginal colonists and press.

Arthur's first public statement showing an awareness of the seriousness of the Aboriginal resistance to the white presence, came on November 29, 1826. During this month, settlers had borne the brunt of the first intensive spate of attacks by Aborigines. In response to this, colonists and the press reverted rapidly from advocating a conciliatory approach to conflict, to extreme measures, particularly exile. Arthur, also influenced by the change in Aboriginal temper and growing fear in the interior, proposed some new measures which, although a development in policy, did not meet colonists' expectations. In his Government Notice, Arthur expressed "extreme regret" that attempts to establish "confidence and cordiality" had not been successful. He authorized the use of force against the Aborigines by magistrates, constables and the military in a wide range of situations. Any person who witnessed a felony committed by the Aborigines could "immediately raise his neighbours and pursue the felons, and the pursuers may justify the use of such means as a constable might use".²³ Although this measure gave some extra leeway, particularly to non-authorized persons to use force against the Aborigines, it did not represent a radical departure from the normal methods of apprehending criminals.

During 1827, Arthur became less hopeful about the use of conventional means to solve the growing crises. In particular, he saw

problems involved in employing the military to cope with warfare.

In a letter of some honesty, he wrote to Captain Clark that

... unless a war of extirpation is sanctioned (which nothing but absolute and irresistible necessity will induce me to authorise or sanction) [you]. . . will be sensible of the extreme difficulty which an officer commanding at one of the outposts must have to contend with in encountering these wretched people who seem everywhere to disappear as soon as they have committed an outrage.²⁴

Until the end of 1827, when the build-up of hostilities was still in its early stages, Arthur held that the prime reason for Aboriginal hostility was the ill-treatment received at the hands of isolated stockmen. This view hindered the formulation of energetic government initiatives against the Aborigines. A letter from Malcolm Laing Smith, Police Magistrate at Norfolk Plains, on the need to alter the present system of stock huts, led Arthur to consider the relationship between pastoral expansion and the original hostility. He recognized that stock keepers had "continually insulted, and ill-used the natives", but found it difficult to find a solution without alienating settlers:

These men are in fact, a most intolerable evil, but then, what is to be done? - independent of his grant a man gets either by purchase or otherwise, more land, on this his stock are driven and of course a stock keeper: if this is not allowed, the settlers will [consider] themselves injured and... if it is, the evil is apparent.²⁵

During the summer months of 1827-1828, Arthur, concerned by the increasing gravity of the situation, decided that "stronger measures" were needed. Following the 1826 press reversal regard-

ing solutions to Aboriginal hostility, the emphasis of official policy now changed from prevention of abuses against Aborigines to an attempt to solve the problem by the isolation of the Aborigines. On January 10, 1828, Arthur proposed to the Secretary of State, Viscount Goderich, that the Aborigines be settled "in some remote quarter of the Island". If they confined themselves there peacefully, they could be given food, clothing and protection.²⁶ Thus Arthur had taken a little over a year to recommend a proposal that was remarkably similar to the main plank in the policy measures proposed by the press.

Arthur glossed over the radical implications of this plan of forced resettlement in the despatch, even claiming that it was a mild scheme. He contrasted it to complete removal from the island which he rejected since it would "aggravate their injuries" and exasperate them "to the last degree".²⁷ It was only justice to attempt his more humane scheme since

... all aggression originated with the white inhabitants, and that therefore much ought to be endured in return before the blacks are treated as an open enemy by the government.²⁸

As the warfare deepened in the summer months, Arthur grew impatient with the unending strife. He summed up his feelings in a despatch written to Goderich three months later. "Repeated murders", he wrote "had so greatly inflamed the passions of the settlers, that...further forbearance would be totally indefensible."²⁹ His plan to end conflict, outlined in an enclosed Proclamation to Settlers,³⁰ was similar to that presented in the January despatch. All Aborigines were to be removed,

forcibly if necessary, from the settled districts. One earlier idea was scrapped - a single reserve for the offending Aborigines. Arthur now maintained that the enmity between the tribes would make this impossible.

Since the removal was only to be temporary - "until such time their habits shall become more civilized" - Arthur requested permission to give relief in the form of food and clothing to assist in this.³¹ It was significant that no plans were mentioned for the "civilization" of the Aborigines in the resettlement scheme. At this stage, Arthur believed that "civilization" for the Tasmanian Aborigines could only be seen in terms of pacification. The reply to Arthur's January despatch concurred with this view.

The ill success which appears to have already attended your exertions to conciliate and civilise these unfortunate beings, leave but slender expectations that you will now succeed in changing their predatory habits for those of a more industrious nature.³²

In formulating this April Proclamation, Arthur had responded partly to settler pressure. As he wrote to Goderich, the "passions of the settlers" had to be calmed. However, he had a growing awareness of the seriousness of the situation. A list of many pages was made of all depredations committed by the Aborigines between 1827 and 1828, and the extent and frequency of attacks must have alarmed all members of the Executive Council, including Arthur, when it was presented at the April, 1828 Council meeting.³³

The formulation of the Proclamation at this meeting was accompanied by some disagreement in government circles, although this was not officially acknowledged. The Council discussed the Proclamation for two days and from private correspondence, it appears that Chief Justice Pedder had misgivings about the original draft of the Proclamation. He believed that its history of the conflict was at variance with the facts:

A stranger reading it would imagine that the natives were the first to commit aggression and that the barbarities of the stock keepers were only acts of retaliation.³⁴

In outlining the causes of conflict, the final version of the Proclamation was ambiguous. Stress was laid on the "aggression, violence and cruelty" which characterized the treatment of the Aborigines in the early settlement period, and it was admitted that of late shepherds, stockmen and sealers "occasionally attack and injure the Aboriginal Natives, without any authority". However, the Aborigines had engaged in violence not only in defence of their persons and in retaliation for ill treatment, but frequently they had performed

...unprovoked outrages on the persons and property of the settlers in this island
... and did indulge in the repeated commission of wanton and barbarous murders, and other crimes.³⁵

It is unlikely that such an interpretation of the history of conflict would have satisfied Pedder. Arthur however, was now strongly influenced by the prevailing opinion in the colony that the commission of violent acts by the Aborigines must be related to their treacherous and savage character.

Pedder's suggestion of the omission of a qualifying phrase in the Proclamation whereby colonists were not to use force against the Aborigines unless properly authorized, "except for necessary self-defence", was also rejected. Pedder felt the qualification to be redundant since questions of self-defence had been dealt with in previous Government Notices. In pointing out his objection to the qualification, Pedder made the actual intention of the Proclamation very clear:

But the object of this Proclamation is their expulsion wherever they may appear in the settled districts and however harmlessly they may be considering themselves. The means are to be by showing a force of soldiers and armed inhabitants. If unhappily the show of force should prove ineffectual then the force must act.³⁶

Although Arthur was able to report some abating of hostilities during the months following this April, 1828 Proclamation,³⁷ his success was shortlived for the period from August till October was marked by a particularly intense spate of attacks. As mentioned previously, the Geary killings on October 13 and the killing of a young boy in the arms of his mother a week later, had attracted the attention of the colony. Even before these deaths, Arthur had received many reports from Police Magistrates on the upsurge in warfare. His response was to urge Magistrates to follow the provisions of the April Proclamation by driving the Aborigines back. Thus, when James Simpson, Police Magistrate of Campbell Town reported another attack by Aborigines using "the most atrocious language and threats",³⁸ Arthur wrote

... these natives are manifesting such a continued hostile spirit; and as I have read from other parts of the Colony disturbing accounts of their sanguinary proceedings, I beg to recommend Mr. Simpson to [determine] ... some decided measures for restraining the aborigines from entering the settled districts.³⁹

Since Aboriginal hostility showed no signs of slackening through the efforts of Police Magistrates to drive the Aborigines back, Arthur decided that a new approach was needed. On November 1, 1828, he issued a Proclamation declaring martial law against the Aborigines in the settled districts. Apart from a military drive, this was the most extreme option open to him. The basic plan of removing Aborigines from the settled districts was retained, but the means for effecting this were greatly extended.⁴⁰ The Proclamation again occupied the attention of the Executive Council for almost two days. This time however, there was no dissention.⁴¹

A central justification for martial law used by Arthur in his correspondence with the new Secretary of State, Sir George Murray, was that it would prevent bloodshed. He claimed that by legalizing strong measures against the Aborigines, they would be forced to retire and thus a highly destructive war which could lead to the "annihilation of the aboriginal tribes" would be avoided. As Arthur put it: "Terror may have the effect which no proffered measures of conciliation have been capable of inducing."⁴²

Arthur and his Council also used the history of past failures of conciliatory efforts to make the proposed course seem more reasonable. The Executive Council now concluded that the Aborigines

were completely beyond conciliation:

And after all, such is the treachery which the natives have evinced in several cases, and so totally do they appear to be without government among themselves, that the Council must doubt if any reliance could be placed upon any negotiation which might be entered into with those who appear to be their chiefs, or with any tribe collectively.⁴³

Arthur concurred with the Council's view of the impracticability and impossibility of conciliating the hostile tribes and he took no active steps in that direction.

A method of discovering the areas of sensitivity of the Colonial Office on the Aborigines' issue is to compare the painted version of the Despatches in the 1831 Parliamentary Paper on operations against the Aborigines in VDL with the complete versions of the Despatches in the Colonial Office Records. Various points were omitted from the published Despatches for the Colonial Office believed complete disclosure of the correspondence to the British public would prove embarrassing. This can be seen by comparing the two versions of Arthur's November 4, 1828 despatch. The following insert from the original despatch into the Parliamentary Paper reveals that a central part of Arthur's justification for the introduction of martial law was excluded:

... the Members of the Council concurred in recommending, as the only means of affording to the King's subjects protection against the atrocities of the Aborigines, that they should be declared under martial law and [as from Earl Bathurst's Despatch to General Darling dated 14th July 1825 (copy of which His Excellency left here for my guidance) it appeared to be the intention of His Majesty's Government, that the alternative of force

should be resorted to in expelling such hostile incursions as the natives have lately made,]

I have felt myself called upon to issue a Proclamation of Martial Law against them, ...⁴⁴

Thus Arthur's justification of martial law by reference to the precedent established four years earlier in instructions to Darling regarding the use of force, was omitted from the published Paper. This reduced the responsibility of the Colonial Office for ensuing events.

* * * *

The significance of the various detailed change in policy outlined in official Proclamations, Government Notices and despatches can easily be exaggerated. Although these statements acted as indicators of the government's current position, they were of limited importance in shaping the general nature of conflict. The press was quick to point out the absurdity of conveying instructions to colonists in complicated legal jargon which was itself often contradictory.⁴⁵ The futility of conveying the government's intentions to the Aborigines in such language needs no comment.

An unforeseen result of the Proclamations and Notices in the developing conflict was the colonists' wide interpretation of them as justification for unprovoked attacks on Aborigines. Thus when the November, 1826 Government Notice appeared, which is must be remembered did not sanction any significant increase in the powers of unauthorized colonists, the Colonial Times reported that the Notice had been interpreted in the colony as a call to effect the extermination of the Aborigines.⁴⁶ The absence of legal prosecutions

against whites for killing Aborigines convinced many that the government's strictures regarding the use of force were not to be taken seriously.

If the colonists in their war against the Aborigines acted independently from the government, often ignoring the conciliatory passages in Proclamations and Government Notices, so too did Arthur's actions belie his own public statements. Although he held back from a final trial of strength with the Aborigines, he sanctioned another method of their destruction by his organization and support of roving parties. The function of these parties was supposedly to harass and capture, but these activities often led to indiscriminate shootings.⁴⁷ It is significant that Arthur placed the organization of the civilian element of these parties in the hands of Thomas Anstey, a man who had shown in his correspondence with Arthur, that he had no sympathy with the Aborigines and whose usual term of reference to them was "miserable race", "wretches" or "scourge".⁴⁸

The murderous activities of the roving parties and the government's collusion with them, was evident in an incident in 1829 involving John Batman,⁴⁹ a landowner of north-eastern VDL and future instigator of treaties with Victorian Aborigines in 1835. Batman had offered his services as a leader of a roving party in June, 1829.⁵⁰ Arthur was greatly pleased with the offer.⁵¹ Batman had already shown his bush skill in the capture of the bushranger, Matthew Brady and up till that time it was unknown for a prominent settler to offer his services against the Aborigines. After considerable discussion about payment, Batman was accepted with the expectation of receiving a grant of 2,000 acres. This was dependent on Thomas

Anstey deciding after twelve months that he had "zealously given [his services] in the prosecution of the undertaking".⁵²

In his very first report on his experiences, Batman described the attempted "capture" of a tribe of Aborigines on the east side of Ben Lomond:

... we arrived within 21 paces of them. The men were drawn up on the right by my orders intending to rush upon them,... but unfortunately as the last man was coming up he struck his musket against that of another of the party, which immediately alarmed the dogs... the Natives arose from the ground and were in the act of running away when I ordered the men to fire on them, which was done.⁵³

Batman then mentioned the capture of two badly wounded men, a woman and a child. He noted with satisfaction the "tracks of blood" left by the departing tribe, which, together with the information supplied by the captured Aborigines suggested that a great number of Aborigines must have been wounded.⁵⁴ His report concluded:

... we left the place for my farm, with the two men, woman and child but found it quite impossible that the two former could walk, and after trying every means in my power, for some time, found I could not get them on. I was obliged therefore to shoot them.⁵⁵

The attack on the tribe was quite legal since it occurred in an area where martial law was in effect. Thus Batman was not reprimanded for this. Some criticism was raised over Batman's later execution of the two male prisoners. Consequently, Batman, together with three other members of the party, was questioned by

Police Magistrates James Simpson and Thomas Anstey.

Seeing the possibility of legal prosecution, Batman completely changed his story at the inquiry from that recorded in his report. His statement below shows how transparently false the new version must have seemed to those present:

In making my official Reports it has been my practice to consider the acts of my party as those of my own and consequently I have generally stated that as done by myself which was performed by my men even when I was not present. In my Report I used the expression "I was obliged therefore to shoot them", the impression being on my mind then being that my men were induced to do so from motives of humanity... I was in advance of the party with a native woman and child on the way to my farm when some of my men who had remained behind with the prisoners came up and reported the circumstances to me... About the 9th or 10th instant I learned in conversation with the men that the real facts were these. That one of the Aborigines... had died from his wounds soon after I left him.⁵⁶

The other prisoner, whom Batman had previously described as "very badly wounded in the ankle and knee", had struck a member of the party, Thomas York, with a stick, according to this later statement. York had then killed him in self-defence.⁵⁷ To quash any lingering doubts, Batman mentioned that the Aborigine shot by York had been the chief of a tribe involved in many murders. The evidence given by three other members of the party, Clark, Gunn and York, was identical.⁵⁸

Batman's story was at least officially accepted for there is no evidence of any further investigation or prosecution. Arthur showed no signs of any loss of confidence in Batman, but on the

contrary expressed his gratification when, on September 21, 1829, Batman reported the capture of eleven Aborigines.⁵⁹ Some months later, when Batman reported on the difficulties involved in capturing Aborigines given their tendency to retreat after the commission of a crime to areas where martial law did not operate, Arthur gave Batman permission to follow the Aborigines to areas where martial law did not exist "under the circumstances he states".⁶⁰

Conciliatory Endeavours on Bruny Island, 1829

During 1829, force remained the main thrust of government policy towards the Aborigines. However, during this year, some beginnings were made towards friendly intercourse with some Aborigines on Bruny Island. As Plomley points out, Arthur's reasons for pursuing this conciliatory attempt with the Aborigines on Bruny Island cannot be known.⁶¹ His suggestion that this was an attempt by Arthur to solve the conflict with peaceful means⁶² is incorrect, for the Bruny Island efforts were only a sideline to the main government policy towards the Aborigines. Perhaps Arthur felt that if his administration was going to be involved in what was shaping up as a large-scale war with the Aborigines, its reputation could at least be partially salvaged if some steps towards peaceful relations could be quoted. Force after failure in conciliation seemed reasonable. In the early stages, religious considerations of uplifting a fallen race were not important and no provision was made for Aboriginal instruction. Later, when the means for instruction came to hand from an unexpected source, Arthur saw the establishment on Bruny Island as an experiment of value for the progress of Christianity among VDL's untutored savages.

The first official interest in the Bruny Island Aborigines came in April, 1828. Captain Welsh reported the presence of a party of about fifty natives who frequented Recherche Bay and Bruny Island. According to Welsh, they had "always showed the greatest friendship" to the crews of government vessels, though some ill-feeling had resulted from the abduction of three women by some sealers.⁶³ When three of the Island's Aborigines visited Hobart later in the same month, Arthur directed that biscuits be supplied to them and they be encouraged to return to Bruny Island, "where an establishment will be formed for them".⁶⁴ Towards this end, a soldier, James Jordan, was sent to Bruny to issue rations to the Aborigines.⁶⁵

Parsimony with food supplies was soon evident. In years to come this was a constant feature of larger scale institutional care for the Tasmanian Aborigines. It was of course, present in the administration of convict needs, but more so with the Aborigines. Their physical welfare was not officially considered the responsibility of the colonial government. Neglect was also fostered by the belief that only scant attention to these needs was necessary since the Aborigines' natural state was marked by a lack of physical comforts. Thus, the soldier stationed on Bruny Island was instructed "in no case to issue more than one pound of biscuit to each native per diem, or half that quantity with a proportion of potatoes".⁶⁶ Arthur no doubt believed he was being particularly generous when he directed the Principal Superintendent of the Penitentiary to report:

... whether there are any inferior or half-worn blankets at the Prisoners' Barracks which could conveniently be spared for the purpose of being distributed among the Natives of Brune Island.⁶⁷

He approved of the suggestion of using "20 or 30 which have been repaired of those which were condemned belong ng to the Military ...".⁶⁸ The Colonial Office underlined this attention to extreme economy when in February, 1829, Arthur was directed to limit assistance

... as much as possible, taking care that the persons who may receive such benefits may understand that they are alone indebted for them to the peaceful disposition which they have manifested, and to the submission which they have shown to the orders of the Colonial Government.⁶⁹

A widening of the conception of the Bruny Island Establishment came in 1829, but not through the planning of the government. Arthur had inserted an advertisement in the Gazette on March 7, 1829, for a person to reside on Bruny Island to communicate with and issue provisions to "this unfortunate race".⁷⁰

Nine persons applied, the successful contender being George Augustus Robinson. His letter disclosed his reasons for applying:

Feeling a strong desire to devote myself to
 . the above cause - and believing the plan
 which your Excellency has devised to be the
 only one whereby this unfortunate race can
 be ameliorated - that as the degraded
 Hottentot has been raised in the *scale* of
 beings - and the inhabitants of the Societies
 Islands are made an industrious and intelli-
 gent race - So likewise - by the same exer-
 tions may the inhabitants of this territory
 be instructed - with these impressions I beg
 to offer myself for the situation.⁷¹

Although Arthur had conceived of the advertised position as primarily that of a storekeeper, Robinson's evident interest in attempting something more presented opportunities for widening

the functions of the Establishment. Arthur therefore directed that Robinson be given double the advertised salary of £50 per annum, if he devoted his whole energies to the Aborigines with particular attention to the children.⁷²

* * * *

Robinson was one of the few Tasmanian colonists who retained his faith in the humanity of the Tasmanian Aborigines in spite of their hostile disposition. He also played a role of unique importance in the conflict between Aborigines and colonists. For these reasons, Robinson's background and the development of attitudes towards the Aborigines during his year on Bruny Island are worthy of inquiry, particularly as they were influential in the treatment of the exiled Aborigines on Flinders Island.

Robinson⁷³ was born on March 23, 1788, probably in London. His father was a builder in Boston, Lincolnshire, and Robinson also joined this trade. There is little known of his early life before emmigration except that he was largely self-educated, showed an interest in religion and had set up as a builder on his own account by 1818. Before this, he was employed in the Engineers' Department at Chatham and in the building of the martello towers on the east coast of England. A diary kept on the voyage to Hobart reveals some aspects of his character as a man of thirty five. He was seriously minded, deeply interested in religion with a love of nature and an adventurous strain.⁷⁴

After his arrival in Hobart in January, 1824, Robinson advanced financially, so that before the end of the year he had amassed £400 through the building trade and employed twelve men. Religious and charitable activities must have dominated his non-working

life, for as well as visiting prisoners in gaol, being secretary of the Van Diemen's Land Seamen's Friend and Bethel Union Society and a committee member of the Auxiliary Bible Society of Van Diemen's Land, he took an active part in the formation of the Van Diemen's Land Mechanics' Institute in 1827. Robinson's wife and five children joined him in Hobart in April, 1826. Robinson saw Arthur's offer of a position on Bruny Island among the Aborigines as an opportunity to devote himself fully to his religious and charitable activities. He had already spent much time and effort working with various disadvantaged groups in his five years in Hobart, but to Robinson, the present task was of more significance - to raise a race of people, now beyond the pale of Christianity and civilization, in the "scale of beings".

During his year on Bruny, Robinson was ambivalent in his attitude towards the Aborigines. On many occasions he was enthusiastic about features of Aboriginal life. But due to his lack of understanding of the mainsprings of Aboriginal tribal and family relationships, he rejected what he felt to be its backward or barbaric aspects. Thus, when two female Aborigines of Bruny Island, Trugernanna and Pagerly, left a sick Aboriginal woman, Dray, to die in the bush as was the custom born of necessity among the nomadic Tasmanian tribes, Robinson was highly critical of them and made his own efforts to fetch Dray.⁷⁵ To Robinson, this revealed an "apathy... common amongst the aborigines of this Colony". Fortunately, Robinson commented, "it does not... extend to their relatives or interfere with those affections which are common to the civilized human creation...".⁷⁶ Robinson was impressed by the strength of these family affections, believing them to be one of

the "many amiable points which glitter like sunbeams through the shroud of darkness by which they are enveloped".⁷⁷

According to Robinson, the Aborigines' intellectual powers were severely limited. In contrast to most other colonists, Robinson ascribed this to lack of contact with stimulating and civilizing influences, not to an innate mental deficiency. His sympathy with the environmentalist view of human nature combined with Christian themes is evident in this diary extract:

The first stages of human life when the habits and ideas are only in the bud and the mind is capable of receiving any impression that is duly enforced, is doubtless the season for inculcation and the only period when precept can be attended with a favourable effect... God has given them the same portion of understanding as ourselves... Those who maintain that the savages of this country are nearly akin to the brutes themselves, oppose their arguments to the dictates of humanity and commonsense itself.⁷⁸

The appearance on Bruny of Robert, an Aborigine who had departed from the lifestyle of his countrymen though reared by whites, convinced Robinson of the probability of success in the civilization of the whole Aboriginal people. He wrote enthusiastically of him:

When I behold this man and contemplate the improvement which a life spent in social intercourse with rational creatures has accomplished on the rough image of a poor aborigine; when I compare him in his original rough and unhappy state with what he is capable of being when the soft hand of civilization has lent a polish to his uncourteous mould; ... I no longer doubt the necessity to imbibe those impressions which through the existence of Almighty God will ultimately lead to their conversion.⁷⁹

As an encouragement to the other Aborigines to follow the path of industry, Robinson successfully persuaded Arthur to grant Robert some land on Bruny Island.⁸⁰

Three weeks after his appointment to Bruny Island, Robinson showed his bent for grandiose schemes of "improvement" for the Aborigines. The broad aim of his plan was "the amelioration of the Aborigines" by civilization and Christianization. The details of his scheme indicated a belief in the importance of order and outward appearances of European ways of living in transforming the Aborigines. Thus the buildings on the Bruny Island settlement were to

... form three sides of a quadrangle opening to the beach, the mission house to be situated at the upper end so as to command a view of the whole establishment, the married persons to occupy one side, the single persons the other.⁸¹

Families were to have a fenced allotment and efforts made to encourage the Aborigines to cook their food in a European manner and generally acquire habits of industry. Public worship and school instruction were envisaged as the main areas for Christian instruction.⁸² He advocated a system of education devised by Dr. Bell, whose overall aim was to produce "good subjects, good men, good Christians". The system was distinguished by the use of repetition to instil knowledge and more advanced pupils to instruct the others.⁸³

In practice, Robinson's efforts on Bruny Island towards "civilization" and Christian conversion were restricted to the introduction of a few superficial features such as the adoption of Western means of burial. Robinson's programme was impeded by his short

stay on Bruny and the diversion of his attention to plans for ending warfare throughout the whole colony and ameliorating the condition of the total Aboriginal population.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Robinson's work on Bruny during 1829, was his efforts to isolate the Aborigines from the European community and the isolation of the young within the Aboriginal community. Both these policies were continued during the Flinders Island period. The latter move arose from his belief that the young Aborigines were the "fulcrum, upon which the lever of mental exertion is primarily to rest". According to Robinson, the transformation of the entire people could be achieved through the separation of the children from their parents' "torpid state of inactivity" and the substitution of proper influences and instruction.⁸⁵

Robinson's advocacy of the removal of Aborigines from settlers' employ rested on two grounds.⁸⁶ He wished to avoid the mixing of Aborigines with the lower social orders of white society, of whom he held views particularly critical. His diary and correspondence continually attest to his view that "the truly deprived white man is worse than the brute itself".⁸⁷ The second reason was his growing belief that the Aborigines could only advance under his tutelage. Six months after his arrival on Bruny Island, he wrote to Arthur that

... I am convinced of the facility of civilizing the rude Aborigine, who has not associated with the lower orders of the whites - provided he be not suffered to depart from this Establishment and be kept under my own immediate eye.⁸⁸

In contrast, Arthur believed that association with settlers would lead to the imbibing of civilized habits of living. When Robinson reported that he had written to various settlers requesting them to direct Aborigines in their employ to the Establishment at Bruny, Arthur informed him that he

... did not see occasion for their parting with such Natives as they have in their employ, provided they use them well, it is just what I should wish.⁸⁹

The departure of some female Aborigines to a neighbouring farming establishment on Bruny Island during August and September, 1829, led Robinson to an obsessive interest in isolating the Aborigines. Letters were sent to the white inhabitants of Bruny Island to inform them of the need to desist from encouraging Aboriginal females,⁹⁰ and Arthur was informed of the whites' "atrocious" conduct.⁹¹ Robinson's over-reaction to these incidents sprang from his knowledge of sexual contact between Aboriginal females and convicts during these visits. His stress on the need to regulate the sexual lives of the Aborigines arose partly from his sympathy with the plight of the male Aborigines and his concern for the possible harm to the women through contact with venereal disease.⁹² He also considered it important to restrict sexual contact to married persons to uplift the moral life of the Aborigines and his realization that favours offered by outside whites could lessen the Aboriginal female dependence on the government's Establishment and thereby weaken his own influence.⁹³

Towards the end of 1829, the government took a closer look at the object and functions of the Bruny Island Establishment. This had been prompted by Robinson's return to Hobart in October, 1829.

During this visit, Arthur directed Robinson to advise him of the feasibility of taking seven captured Aborigines to Bruny.⁹⁴

Robinson informed Arthur that the present Establishment could not be used as a reception area for captured Aborigines. The treatment of such Aborigines was a matter that required the "most judicious measures", for

... any aborigine who had been bred up in the wilderness and never partook of European luxuries could not easily be induced to forego his native habits.⁹⁵

According to Robinson, it was a complex task requiring proper means of confinement, together with skilful ingratiation, to transform the Aborigines' hostile spirit to one of "sorrow and remorse" for their past behaviour.⁹⁶

This refusal to accept the captured Aborigines, together with Robinson's September Report,⁹⁷ which suggested the difficulties of the Island for a permanent Aboriginal Establishment, convinced Arthur of the need for an alternative to Bruny. The matter was urgent as Arthur had a growing number of captured Aborigines on his hands who, for want of a better alternative, were housed in gaols and lunatic asylums.⁹⁸ Arthur's plan for Robinson's Establishment had thus shifted from a sidelight where a few friendly Aborigines could be conciliated and perhaps civilized to an integral part of his plans to pacify the Aborigines throughout the colony. Robinson was instructed to survey Maria Island off the east coast with a view to using it as a permanent Establishment.⁹⁹

Robinson set out for Maria Island on October 24, and, after a short stay, gave a negative report on the Island to a Board set up by Arthur to consider the question of a satisfactory site for a permanent Establishment.¹⁰⁰ This Board later widened its terms of reference and became the Aboriginal Committee. The Committee considered most questions of policy relating to the Aborigines for the next four years.¹⁰¹ At this stage it consisted of the Colonial Treasurer (Jocelyn Thomas), the Chief Police Magistrate (P. Mulgrave), the Colonial Surgeon (J. Scott) and the Port Officer (Lieutenant Hill, R.N.). During December, two extra members were included, Rev. William Bedford and Rev. James Norman. When Archdeacon Broughton, from NSW, visited VDL in early 1830, he became chairman of the Committee.

In its first report the Committee agreed with Robinson's findings,¹⁰² that neither Bruny Island nor Maria Island were suitable locations for a permanent Aboriginal Establishment. They accepted Robinson's view on the unavoidable and detrimental effects of contact between Aborigines and whites on Bruny Island, and also its disadvantages in terms of the small quantity of arable land and easy means of escape. After hearing Robinson's views on the unsuitability of Maria Island, they also concluded that this site lacked security and the means of preventing intercourse with prisoners already on the Island. The Committee recommended that Maria Island might be used as a temporary expedient and the islands to the north east of VDL - the Kent group - might be surveyed with a view to using one of them as a permanent Establishment. This was the beginning of a debate on the suitability of various island sites that lasted many years. Since it was impractical to occupy islands in the Bass Strait at present,

Arthur also favoured Maria Island as a better temporary alternative to Bruny Island, particularly since the Establishment could be supplied with food, clothing and medicine "without any expense beyond that of the items...".¹⁰³

Discussion in the Executive Council revealed that the function of the Aboriginal Establishment was not yet fully defined. Arthur very generally stated that it would be used for "captured Natives and such others as did not object to go there", but the question of whether the eventual aim was the removal of all Aborigines was sidestepped. As it turned out, the departure of Robinson led to the collapse of the Bruny Island settlement and it was not until a year later that a permanent establishment got under way. It was clear however, that the first steps towards an official policy of expatriation had been taken, for it had been quietly established that it was not improper to remove at least a section of the Aboriginal population from the mainland to a settlement where escape was impossible.

During these last two months of 1829, various public officers considered two other questions that became perennial problems in the administration of confined Aborigines. The first was the high mortality rate that prevailed among the Aborigines at Bruny. Robinson reported on September 23, 1829, ^{that} twenty two Aborigines had died during his six month stay on the Island.¹⁰⁴ These deaths naturally disturbed Robinson for he had developed a close relationship with a number of the diseased Aborigines.¹⁰⁵ This high rate of mortality did not lead him to an examination of the causes of the deaths. In his report to Arthur on the circumstances, he

focussed attention on the uplifting of the mind upon beholding

... that Omnipotent Being who regulates and governs all things here below, sensible that what is, is just, and that all things work together for the common good.¹⁰⁶

Arthur's more practical frame of mind was not satisfied with this interpretation. On November 23, he directed the Committee considering a suitable site for the new settlement to investigate the great mortality among the Aborigines and "state whether you are satisfied with Mr. Robinson's explanation".¹⁰⁷ The Committee was not over concerned about the deaths. After a short enquiry, it ascribed them to "natural causes" and the "extreme rigour and inclemency of the late season".¹⁰⁸

Another issue was the desirable scale of rations for the Aborigines of Bruny Island. Robinson had been instructed at the beginning of his service to give the Aborigines only a pound of biscuits each, or half a pound with a proportion of potatoes.¹⁰⁹ This ration had been in force since May, 1828, when the introduction of food handouts had begun. Robinson, soon realizing that the supply of food was a useful means of exerting control over the Aborigines, submitted that this amount was "wholly inadequate for their support".¹¹⁰ The Committee assembled to consider the issue of rations consisted of the Commissary-General (Mr. Browne) and two members of the Aboriginal Committee, Lieutenant Hill and Mr. Mulgrave. They agreed with Robinson's view of the relationship between the civilizing effort and the supply of food. Their Report stated that insufficient food threw

... the Natives on their accustomed precarious resources of Fishing and Hunting, [tending] rather to increase their love of a wandering life than

to encourage in them the habits of Industry and of a civilized community.¹¹¹

Considering the "gluttonous propensities of Savages", the Committee recommended an increased scale of rations, consisting of 1lb. wheat meal, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. vegetables, 1lb. fresh meat and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. salt. Tea and sugar were to be given to the sick while tobacco was to be issued "only as a Stimulative or Reward".¹¹² The suggestion of fresh meat rather than salted was probably the result of Robinson's representations for he was aware of the Aborigines' extreme distaste for salted meat.¹¹³ The scale of rations remained much the same for later Aboriginal Establishments. Unfortunately, the Committee's recommendation of fresh meat was not always adhered to.

* * * *

Robinson's attentions had now shifted from the administration of a fixed settlement to a wider field of conciliating Aborigines throughout the Island. As early as June, 1829, he had proposed an expedition extending from the Huon River to Port Davey to inform Aborigines in this area of the peaceful intentions of the government.¹¹⁴ In December, he began serious planning. He explained the purpose of the trip to Arthur on December 19, 1829:

... to proceed on an expedition to Port Davey for the purpose of endeavouring to effect an amicable understanding with the aborigines in that quarter and through them with the tribes in the interior.¹¹⁵

Thus Robinson began on an expedition which was to be the forerunner of five other similar missions. At this stage, Robinson viewed his

mission primarily as one of pacification by conciliation. When the government's policy changed to that of capture and expatriation of the whole of the Aboriginal population, the role of Robinson's missions also changed. He became instrumental in the complete removal of the Aborigines from their homeland.

Was it likely that Robinson would have undertaken the organization of the expatriation of the Tasmanian Aborigines at the beginning of his service when his sympathetic concern was at its height? Was the history of his work marked by a decline in his early idealism? Plomley has suggested that Robinson's early work among the Aborigines was prompted by "one flash of quite disinterested virtue", but that once he was successful in capturing the Big River tribe at the end of 1831, "disinterestness was replaced more and more by self seeking and the natives became little more than an adjunct to his material progress".¹¹⁶ This view of Robinson's work is not entirely justified. Certainly the financial prospects in completing his mission were of increasing concern to Robinson. But he had sacrificed his successful building enterprise and there is no doubt that his fears concerning his own safety had some foundation. Considering it was an age where it was not considered grasping to demand financial reward for public service, it would have required an unusually self-denying person not to press for payment for services such as Robinson rendered.

Furthermore, Robinson's later support for exile which led to material reward for him was not inconsistent with a continuing regard for his view of the best means of ameliorating the condition of the Aborigines. To keep Robinson's role in perspective, it

needs to be stressed that in this period some of the most progressive policies towards the Aborigines, advocated by men who were not racists and who were concerned and sympathetic to the Aborigines, were as equally destructive in their results as the indiscriminate slaughter of Aborigines by settlers and stockmen. These policies, although characterized by varying degrees of idealism, took for granted the great vocation of the British Empire to annihilate other cultures in order that more "primitive" peoples could enjoy "every social advantage which our superior wealth and knowledge at once confer on us the power and impose on us the duty of imparting to them".¹¹⁷ However, as the Tasmanian experience clearly illustrated, misguided attempts by missionaries and government agents such as Robinson to substitute one culture for another, often led to the near destruction of the race itself.

Robinson thus embodied both the positive and the negative aspects of nineteenth century missionary endeavour. On the one hand, he recognized the Aborigines as human beings deserving humane treatment, and he strove to follow a policy which incorporated these beliefs. On the other hand, his European ethnocentricity led his portrayal of the Aborigines' lifestyle as next to worthless and justified his efforts to order Aboriginal society along European lines. The complete removal of the Aborigines from their homeland to prevent bloodshed and inculcate them with the values of Western civilization and Christianity, was thus not inconsistent with Robinson's original vision, since at no stage did he value the retention of the Aborigines' own way of life.

Conciliation to Force: Government Policy December 1829-March 1830

Robinson's proposed plan of a conciliatory mission to the Aborigines coincided with an impasse in government measures to solve the Aboriginal/settler conflict. The greatest possible military protection had been afforded to settlers, while martial law gave settlers the utmost power to defend themselves. Yet all this had failed to stem the tide of conflict. When Robinson offered to lead a conciliatory mission, a plan which had strong support from the colony's chaplain, Rev. William Bedford, Arthur was persuaded that this new approach should at least be tried.

The first sign of Arthur's oscillation came at the December 17 Executive Council meeting.¹¹⁸ In his address, Arthur outlined the measures the government had taken to remove the Aborigines from the settled districts and pointed to their ineffectiveness. In a surprising reversal of previous sentiments, he maintained that it had "long appeared" to him that "conciliation alone was likely to attend with success". Realizing that Robinson's proposed expedition could not provide a complete alternative to the present measures because of its untried nature, Arthur simply mentioned it and requested that the Council consider all other possible expedients. He concluded by explicitly rejecting the practice of offering rewards for captured Aborigines, maintaining that the benefits were doubtful and that "unnecessary slaughter" might result.¹¹⁹

The Council, although fully sensible to the present "difficulty of freeing the Settled districts", could not suggest any further

measures. Doubt was expressed on the usefulness of a conciliatory approach, but it declared that no means should be left untried.¹²⁰

A month later Arthur moved further towards conciliation. He directed the Aboriginal Committee to consider the effect of suspending martial law while Robinson's mission was in progress. No measure, he declared, "should be left untried to restore peace with the natives".¹²¹

The Aboriginal Committee was ready to more than meet Arthur. Not only did they recommend the suspension of martial law, but also advocated the calling in of roving parties and the undertaking of further missions similar to Robinson's. In a strong attack on the system of roving parties, they recalled a recent Aboriginal murder described in Jorgen Jorgenson's January report, to show their "abhorence and reprobation".¹²²

The peak of Arthur's vacillation was reached in mid-February. In his address to the Executive Council on February 18, 1830, Arthur reconsidered his backing of conciliation due to the growing alarm in the colony, particularly in the Clyde area. Yet he was unwilling to completely forego the chance to experiment with conciliation. He proposed a "middle course", calling upon,

... the Settlers to exercise forbearance towards them as far as the personal safety of their families would admit, and offering a reward to any individual... who should effect a successful intercourse with any tribe, and notifying that the Military and roving parties should be ordered to abstain

from any operations against the Natives except such as should be purely defensive.¹²³

Before these sentiments could be incorporated into a Government Order, Arthur again reconsidered his position. The following day he received information of further Aboriginal attacks and in the light of these, he curbed the conciliatory tone of the proposed Government Order. He claimed to the Council that the Aborigines would "derive fresh courage" from any hesitancy in the show of force.¹²⁴ The colonial Treasurer, Jocelyn Thomas, who was a member of both the newly-formed Aboriginal Committee and the Executive Council, informed the Council that the Aboriginal Committee had also undergone a change of feeling, concurring with Arthur on the need for more rigorous measures.¹²⁵ This was the first instance of the Committee's adaptability to Arthur's various changes in policy.

This uncertainty over the wisdom of a reversal in policy led to a compromising stance on the final wording of the Government Order. It was asserted that the "way to a conciliation may be opening", and to encourage this, rewards were offered to individuals "who shall effect a successful intercourse with any tribe". The final paragraph of the Order betrayed the conciliatory spirit of the early section and the substance of the 1828 Proclamations was repeated:

... no effort should be spared to expel those who will not be conciliated from the settled districts, where they continue to practice the utmost perfidy and inhumanity.¹²⁶

During the next few days, Arthur's readiness to bow to settler pressure on the Aborigines issue was further evidenced. As will be remembered, the third week of February was a period of upsurge of Aboriginal hostility focussing on the burning of Sherwin's premises. The colony resounded with a chorus of opposition to the mild tone of the February 19 Government Order. Arthur was concerned at the turn of events, particularly the destruction of Sherwin's premises. He arranged for Sherwin to give a detailed account of the attack to the Executive Council and the Aboriginal Committee on February 23.

Arthur drew the same conclusion as the press from this attack. He now declared that conciliation was "fruitless" and reverting back to the spirit behind the November 1828 Proclamation on martial law, stated that the only effective policy would be to induce fear in the Aborigines.¹²⁷ Predictably, the Executive Council and the Aboriginal Committee concurred with Arthur's view.¹²⁸ The Council advised the adoption of the following measures:

- 1st - That the parties employed against them should be increased.
- 2nd - That every soldier that could be spared should be sent out and as many as possible mounted.
- 3rd - That a reward of £5 should be given for every adult native taken alive, and delivered up at one of the Police Stations.
- 4th - That another and more pressing application should be made for blacks from Sydney to be employed as guides.
- 5th - That the Settlers should be strongly urged to adopt every means of precaution, and to arm males in their families above the age of fourteen.¹²⁹

A new Government Order was issued on February 25 embodying the main

provisions of these recommendations as they applied to the general population - the introduction of rewards and the importance of vigorous action by settlers.¹³⁰ Arthur's tentative experiment with conciliation was over.

The exact wording of the offer of rewards to settlers for captured Aborigines was the subject of considerable discussion in the Executive Council. Arthur's original proposal was to offer the reward for any adult Aborigine delivered alive to the government, but Burnett, the Colonial Secretary, favoured the addition of the words "and uninjured" after "alive" to avoid unnecessary cruelty.¹³¹ Arthur at first concurred with Burnett's view, but later favoured his original wording. His explanation for this underlined the bloody nature of the reward offer:

It would scarcely be possible to capture any of the blacks without in some way wounding them and that the doubt or suspicion with which the prisoners would regard such a qualification, would greatly tend to lessen the effect of the offer of the reward... 132

The rest of the Council concurred but advised that a reward of £2 might be given for every child captured to avoid them being abandoned. This suggestion was adopted.

The other new feature of the Order was the stress placed on the need for precautionary action to be taken by settlers. It was inferred that the settlers had in large part only themselves to blame for their situation. The Aborigines were not a formidable enemy, but only "an inconsiderable number of a very feeble race". The Order maintained that settlers could easily defend themselves

by undertaking ordinary measures of precaution. Their failure to do so had contributed to the frequency of Aboriginal attacks since the Aborigines had thereby derived added courage. This lack of support for harassed settlers was not viewed favourably by the Colonial Office, who saw the effective protection of British colonists as a central function of the Colonial Government.¹³³

In the following months, Arthur often resorted to this retort to forstall criticism of the government's inability to provide effective protection to outlying settlers. These settlers continually informed Arthur of the seriousness of the situation, their need for military protection and compensation for damage caused by Aborigines.¹³⁴ The Executive Council explicitly rejected the idea of assistance to those who had suffered from Aboriginal attacks, claiming it "would lessen the vigilance of the settlers generally".¹³⁵ A Carlton settler, H. Macguinnas, experienced the consequences of Arthur's rigid policy. He requested in March, 1830, that one or two soldiers be sent for protection as the area of his isolated farm was "infested" with Aborigines.¹³⁶ Upon receipt of the request, Arthur noted unsympathetically: "A safety guard cannot be allowed to any particular individual!"¹³⁷ When, five days later, the same man reported an attack on his hut and theft of all its contents, including firearms, Arthur only responded with irritation:

Inform Mr. Macguinnas that if he suffers his property to be left in a manner so unprotected I am neither surprised at the consequences nor the least disposed to relieve any individual who acts so carelessly, so imprudently - It is actually placing firearms in the hands of the Natives.¹³⁸

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 3

1. West, op.cit., p.625, n.27.
2. Reece, op.cit., pp.87ff.
3. Curr, op.cit., passim.
4. Tasmanian, September 18, 1829.
5. *ibid.*
6. Jorgenson to Arthur, January 5, 1828 (Arthur Papers, Vol.49).
7. Tasmanian, June 6, 1828.
8. Melrose to Aboriginal Committee, March 1, 1830 (C.S.O., 1/323/7578).
9. Tasmanian, September 18, 1829.
10. Bedford to Arthur, November 26, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/323/7578).
11. Frankland to Arthur, October 25, 1828 (Arthur Papers, Vol.9).
12. *ibid.*
13. Quoted in Turbull, op.cit., p.65.
14. *ibid.*, pp.65-66.
15. West, op.cit., pp.80-81.
16. Gazette, November 5, 1824.
17. Turnbull, op.cit., pp.62-69.
18. Plomley, op.cit., p.28.
19. See Chapter 1.
20. Turnbull, op cit., pp.69-70.
21. Military Operations, p.3.
22. Arthur to Scott, April 2, 1828 (the Lieutenant-Governor's Letterbook, 1826-1829. Tasmanian State Archives).
23. Turnbull, op.cit., pp.73-75.
24. Arthur to Clark, 1827, Draft. (C.S.O., 1/70/4072).
25. Arthur's note on Smith to Colonial Secretary, July 23, 1827 (C.S.O., 1/316/7578).

26. Arthur to Goderich, January 10, 1828, Military Operations, p.4.
27. *ibid.*
28. *ibid.*, pp.3-4.
29. Arthur to Goderich, April 17, 1828, *ibid.*, p 5.
30. *ibid.*, pp.5-7.
31. *ibid.*, p.5.
32. Huskisson to Arthur, May 6, 1828.
33. Executive Council Minutes, April 17, 1828.
34. Pedder to Arthur, April 3, 1828 (Arthur Papers, Vol.9).
35. Proclamation, April 15, 1828, Military Operations, p.6.
36. Pedder to Arthur, *loc.cit.* Emphasis in original.
37. Arthur to Huskisson, July 5, 1828, Military Operations, p.8.
38. Simpson to Burnett, September 4, 1828 (C.S.O., 1/316/7578).
39. *ibid.* Arthur's minute.
40. Military Operations, pp.11.12.
41. Executive Council Minutes, October 30,31, 1828, Military Operations, pp.9.10.
42. Arthur to Murray, November 4, 1828.
43. Executive Council Minutes, October 31, 1828.
44. Arthur to Murray, November 4, 1828, Military Operations, p.9. Section in brackets from original despatch.
45. Colonial Times, November 6, 1828.
46. *ibid.*, November 8, 1828.
47. See below, p.108.
48. Anstey to Arthur, May 20, 1829 (Arthur Papers, Vol.20); Anstey to Arthur, April 18 (C.S.O., 1/253/6069).
49. A.D.B., I, pp.67-71.
50. Batman to Gray, June 16, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/321/7578).

51. ibid., Arthur's m inute.
52. Batman to Burnett and Arthur's minute, July 8, 1829
 (C.S.O., 1/321/7578).
53. Batman to Anstey, August 7, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/320/7578).
 Batman is clearly the unnamed person referred to in J.E.
Calder's account of the incident. Some Account of the Wars,
Extirpation, Habits, etc. of the Native Tribes of Tasmania,
Hobart, 1875.
54. Batman to Anstey, ibid.
55. ibid. My emphasis. This incident makes nonsense of James
Bonwick's claim that Batman offered his services to stem
the tide of bloodshed and "save the Blacks from destruc-
tion". Bonwick, op.cit., p.190.
56. Statement made by Batman before Thomas Anstey and James
Simpson, September 23, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/330/7578).
57. ibid.
58. Statements made by James Clark, James Gunn and Thomas
York, September 25, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/322,330/7578).
59. Batman to Anstey and Arthur's minute, September 21, 1829
 (C.S.O., 1/320/7578).
60. Batman to Anstey and Arthur's minute, February 1, 1830
 (C.S.O., 1/320/7578).
61. Plomley, op.cit., p.49.
62. ibid.
63. ibid., pp.49-51.
64. Arthur's memo, November 28 (C.S.O., 1/316/7578).
65. Plomley, op.cit., p.50.
66. ibid., p.50.
67. Arthur's memo, February 20, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/316/7578).
68. Lakeland to Burnett and Arthur's minute, August 27, 1828
 (C.S.O., 1/330/7578).
69. Murray to Arthur, February 20, 1829 Military Operations,
 p.8.
70. Gazette, March 7, 1829.
71. Robinson's application, March 16, 1829 (C.S.O.,
 1/321/7578).

72. Arthur's memo, March 29, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
73. A.D.B., I, pp.385-387; Plomley, op.cit., pp.11-13.
74. N.J.B. Plomley, Immigrant of 1824, Hobart, 1973.
75. Diary entry, September 30, 1830, Plomley, op.cit., p.80.
76. *ibid.*
77. *ibid.*
78. Diary entry, January 1, 1830, *ibid.*, p.93.
79. Diary entry, September 8, 1829, *ibid.*, pp.69-70.
80. *ibid.*
81. Robinson to Arthur, April 15, 1829 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.33, Mitchell Library).
82. *ibid.*
83. Plomley, op.cit., p.102, n.21.
84. Robinson, 'Report on the State of the Establishment of Bruni Island', June 12, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
85. *ibid.*
86. *ibid.*; Robinson to Kelly and Lucas, Circular, July 8, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
87. Robinson to Arthur, September 23,24, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
88. Robinson to Arthur, September 23, 1829. See also Robinson to Arthur, September 9, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
89. 'Analysis of Annexed Report on the State of the Establishment Formed at Brune Island for Ameliorating the Condition of the Natives.' n.d. (C.S.O., 1.317.7578). See also Burnett to Robinson, June 27, 1829 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.32).
90. Plomley, op.cit., pp.104-105, n.49.
91. Robinson to Arthur, September 9, 1829 (Tasmanian Aborigines, Mitchell Library); Robinson to Arthur, September 21, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
92. Plomley, op.cit., p.77.
93. Diary entry, September 21, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
94. Plomley, op.cit., p.105, n.50.
95. *ibid.*, p.81.
96. *ibid.*

97. Robinson to Arthur, September 9, 1829 (Tasmanian Aborigines).
98. Plomley, op.cit., p.82.
99. ibid., p.83.
100. Diary entries, November 9,12, 1829, Plomley, op.cit., p.86; Government Order, November 9, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
101. On December 24, the Colonial Secretary asked the Board to become a "standing committee for the care and treatment of the captured aborigines and for suggesting such measures of conciliation as they shall appear to you calculated to bring about a permanent friendly intercourse between the native tribes and the colonists". Plomley, op.cit., p.98.
102. For summary see Executive Council Minutes, December 17, 1829.
103. ibid.
104. Robinson to Colonial Secretary, September 23, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
105. Diary entry, September 21, 1829, Plomley, op.cit., pp.74-75.
106. Robinson to Colonial Secretary, September 23, 1829, (C.S.O., 1.317/7578).
107. Colonial Secretary to Aboriginal Committee, November 23, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
108. Diary entry, November 26, 1829, Plomley, op.cit., p.88.
109. Minute no.70A, April 16, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
110. Report, November 11, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/70/4072).
111. ibid.
112. ibid.
113. Diary entry, January 16, 1830, Plomley, op.cit., p.95.
114. Robinson, 'Report on the State of the Establishment at Bruni Island', June 12, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
115. Robinson to Burnett, December 19, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/328/7578).
116. Plomley, op.cit., p.112.
117. Russell to Gipps, December 21, 1839. Quoted in Woolmington, op.cit., p.12.

118. Executive Council Minutes, December 17, 1829.
119. *ibid.*
120. *ibid.*
121. Parramore to Aboriginal Committee, January 30, 1830, (C.S.O., 1/317/7578).
122. Aboriginal Committee to Burnett, February 2, 1830 (C.S.O., 1/319/7578).
123. Executive Council Minutes, February 18, 1830.
124. *ibid.*, February 19, 1830.
125. *ibid.*
126. Government Order, February 19, 1830, Military Operations, p.34.
127. Executive Council Minutes, February 23, 1830.
128. *ibid.*; Aboriginal Committee Minutes, February 23, 1830.
129. Executive Council Minutes, February 23, 1830.
130. Military Operations, p.35.
131. Executive Council Minutes, February 26, 1830.
132. *ibid.*
133. Murray to Arthur, November 5, 1830, Military Operations, p.56.
134. Vicary to Colonial Secretary, April 24, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
135. Executive Council Minutes, February 26, 1830.
136. Macguinnas to Colonial Secretary, March 8, 1830 (C.S.O., 1/316/7578).
137. Arthur's minute on Macguinnas to Colonial Secretary, *ibid.*
138. Macguinnas to Colonial Secretary and Arthur's minute, March 13, 1830 (C.S.O., 1/316/7578).

CHAPTER 4THE BLACK LINE AND REMOVAL. FEBRUARY 1830-OCTOBER 1836

The mood of colonists and the direction of government policy remained aggressively anti-Aboriginal after the upsurge of hostilities culminating in the Sherwin attack of February, 1830. Two practical ventures to contain Aboriginal hostility in the first half of 1830 ran counter to this trend. They were directed by John Batman and G.A. Robinson, two men whose past methods of work among the Aborigines were dramatically opposed. Both now planned to rely on pacified Aborigines to contact unco-operative tribes with a view to peaceful communication or capture. Batman also struck upon the novel method of using Sydney Aborigines to supplement the efforts of the Tasmanians.

If the broad object and methods of both parties were similar, the underlying orientations still differed. Robinson viewed his work as a continuation of his Bruny Island mission and now planned to use peaceful methods to win the loyalty of the remaining Aboriginal tribes. The twin process of Christian conversion and civilization would eventually "reclaim" them. The first six months of Robinson's expedition to the south western and western tribes were uneventful. Since he was not aware that the government had adopted a policy of indiscriminate capture till July 14, Robinson concentrated on establishing friendly contact with Aborigines he met.

Batman's aims were more pragmatic. His search for alternative methods had been prompted by the ineffectiveness of traditional capture parties. His repeated failure to produce captured Aborigines placed his promised land grant in jeopardy. He claimed his secondary aim was to render free Aboriginal tribes less hostile by persuading them of the peaceful disposition of the government and settlers. It is doubtful if Batman genuinely believed in the chances of such a voluntary reconciliation. However, evidence of conciliatory intentions and of brief contact was useful in persuading the government of his humane outlook and active involvement in his Aboriginal work.

Batman first expressed discontent with the current system of roving parties in February, 1830. From his "close observation" he wrote:

... there is very little chance of the present party opening a reconciliation whilst such a deadly hatred exists on the part of many of the Tribes towards the Whites.¹

He maintained that a more effective method would be to procure a party of Sydney Aborigines to carry out a reconciliation. The use of imported Aborigines as guides had been suggested by various parties.² Two Sydney Aborigines, Pidgeon and Crook, had participated in Batman's successful capture raid of September, 1829, and they were still in his employ.³ However, the reputation of Mosquito had discouraged the further importation of Sydney Aborigines to VDL. The frustration of other strategies led the Aboriginal Committee to recommend the scheme in February, 1830.⁴ It was not officially sanctioned till September, 1831.⁵

Batman's opportunity to implement the other component of his new approach came in March. Some Aborigines whom Batman had captured in September, 1829, were sent to Launceston to be released.⁶

Batman saw Arthur in Launceston on April 2, 1830, and explained his plan for using the captured women for conciliation and further captures. Arthur agreed to the scheme and Batman obtained custody of the women. He took them from Launceston to his farm at Ben Lomond. A few days later, laden with blankets and food supplies, the combined group of Sydney and Tasmanian Aborigines left the farm for the bush. Local settlers were warned not to interfere with their movements.⁷ In a letter to Thomas Anstey, written a few days after their departure, Batman explained his reasons for confidence in the plan:

From the appearance of those Women and also the knowledge of their language my Two Sydney Natives have acquired: the promises that have been made and the things given to them - I am almost certain this plan will succeed. If it does not no means in my opinion will ever induce them to be on friendly terms with the Settlers etc.⁸

He felt that the conciliation of one tribe would "in a short time", lead to the allaying of the hostile spirits of tribes throughout the island.

One week later however, the two Sydney Aborigines returned without their Tasmanian companions and with disappointing news for Batman. According to their account, the women had discarded all their newly acquired possessions and had left them in the middle of the night, soon after their departure from the farm. Batman again sent out the Sydney Aborigines to find either the women or any other tribes.⁹ This expedition also proved a failure for after three weeks in the bush, they returned without sighting a single

Aborigine.¹⁰ Batman was extremely annoyed at what he believed to be a lack of co-operation by the Tasmanian women: "I now think they have no thoughts of returning back again and have entirely forgotten their promises." Their "treacherous" conduct prompted a reappraisal of his opinion of the Aborigines. He was "at a loss" to know what to think "of this wretched race of people".¹¹

Anstey, upon receiving Batman's report of the women's behaviour, concurred with his conclusions and maintained that the history of the exercise provided ample justification for a hardening of approach:

This letter from Mr. Batman reached my hands on Saturday night last... It announces the entire failure of the scheme for conciliating the Aborigines through the agency of the Captured Women. I send this letter to Mr. Burnett for the information of the Lieutenant Governor who will receive with regret the certain intelligence that force is the only resource.¹²

Before the end of May, the misdirection of both Batman's and Anstey's comments was made abundantly clear, for the women returned to Launceston with a very different tale to tell. Batman reported his interview with them in a letter to Anstey:

I understand they were brought in from Pipers River by some Settlers men that live there. It appears that one of the women died and another was shot by those men - and those that arrived here have been very ill treated. The Blankets, Dogs, etc, that I gave them on leaving my farm was (sic) taken from them - I also learn from the Women that they could not fall in with any Natives. The man that brought them in, I understand has gone to Hobart to get the reward for bringing them in -13

Thus the incompatibility between conciliatory and other government measures with the general behaviour of the colonists was clear.

Arthur, on hearing of the fate of the women, wrote that nothing "could have distressed me more", and ordered "the strictest investigation".¹⁴ Apart from a half-hearted attempt by Batman to discover the true facts of the incident at Pipers River, nothing was done.¹⁵ This suggested that Arthur's indignation stemmed mainly from the foiling of the scheme rather than from genuine concern over the women's treatment.

During June, July and August, Batman undertook numerous travels through the bush in search of Aborigines. Sometimes the Tasmanian women accompanied him, but often he sent them out alone. Batman was totally unsuccessful in organizing the capture or conciliation of any Aborigines during these months.¹⁶ He maintained that he had provided some security to the district by keeping the Aborigines on the move.¹⁷ His efforts were deemed sufficient for Arthur to authorize a land grant of 2,000 acres.¹⁸ After a year in pursuit of Aborigines, Batman's recommendation for government policy was to increase the number of parties. "Nothing", he wrote, "but severe steps for a time will effect a reconciliation."¹⁹

Perhaps Batman's only redeeming action was his attempt to have the rewards extended to cover his Aboriginal helpers. After some delay, his request was acceded to. The two Sydney Aborigines (Pidgeon and Crook) and one Tasmanian (Black Bill), received grants of 100 acres each.²⁰ To the Times, the suggestion of bestowing land grants on Aborigines resembled "burlesque":

Let us be told what Mr. Black Bill and his companions can (and we do not enquire what they will) do with the grants, and we may perhaps view the thing differently... We

dare say that a showy mecklace or two, or a few gaudy ribands to bestow upon the girls or the gins of their hearts, would have been much more highly valued by all three... than the doubtful honor they now possess of having their names enrolled among the Van Diemen's Land Settlers.²¹

Encouraged by a slackening of hostilities after February and the activities of Batman and Robinson, Arthur's policy oscillated once again. The first indication of the change was his despatch of April 15, 1830. The body of the despatch still stressed the treacherous character of the Aborigines, but concluded on a different note. The activities of Batman and Robinson had given Arthur hope. It was simply a question of making "our real intentions towards them" known, for no doubt they

... are wearied with the harassing life they have endured for a considerable time past, and would gladly be reconciled...²²

This unrealistic stance was apparent in Arthur's correspondence with settlers. Upon receiving a report of the theft of the contents of a hut, including firearms, on Sherwin's property, Arthur commented that it was "unaccountable that in such meetings as these the natives cannot be conciliated". The incident gave him hope that "their animosity is abating" since the attack was reasonably restrained.²³ Similarly, he informed Captains Vicary and Clark that "every Exertion" must be used for conciliating this "unfortunate race", particularly since their conduct at the latest attack on Captain Clark's home had not been marked by extreme animosity.²⁴

Even an endeavour by Captain Welsh of Launceston to capture some

Aborigines came under criticism, since these Aborigines had proffered friendly overtures. Arthur informed Captain Welsh that a more "judicious" measure would have been to give the Aborigines presents and then "suffered them to depart whenever they desired to".²⁵ This censure contradicted official policy which sanctioned the capture of all Aborigines, regardless of behaviour.

As well as underrating the hostile intent of the Aborigines, Arthur continued his efforts to absolve the government from the responsibility for protecting settlers. He stressed the inadequacy of the settlers' efforts to protect themselves and the Police Magistrates own responsibility for forming plans to protect settlements.²⁶

According to Arthur, not only were local Police Magistrates lacking in initiative, but they were incompetent. Vicary, Police Magistrate at Bothwell, was upbraided for his report of an attack on a farmer in July, 1830.²⁷ Arthur implied that if the Aborigines had been pursued when first sighted in the district, the ensuing attack could have been avoided. Although he had often been informed of the difficulty of tracing Aborigines in the bush, Arthur now maintained that capture could have easily resulted as the Aborigines "always move very leisurely". He declared further that the government's

... only hope of putting an end to the warfare with the natives centres in the plans which may be put into operation by himself [Vicary] and other gentlemen holding similar situations.²⁸

Vicary protested vigorously against this inference of neglect of duty.²⁹ However, along with other Police Magistrates, Vicary now

despaired of using conventional means to end conflict.³⁰

Vicary's pessimism was embraced by the colonial press and the bulk of settlers. During 1830, the press periodically gave expression to their long held belief that an aggressive government-directed policy was necessary to stem the tide of conflict.³¹ Arthur received numerous representations on the same theme.³² Some suggested the employment of a combined civilian and military force to capture Aborigines in one movement or several local movements. Others had more bizarre ideas. Rowcroft suggested the employment of New Zealand chiefs in the conflict. These would

... no doubt if permitted or found necessary take the Aborigines off this island back with them to serve as prisoners and slaves, which would perhaps be a better lot for them than remaining in their own country to be exterminated...³³

The hiatus between Arthur and the rest of the community widened in August, 1830. During this month, Arthur attempted to put into practice his growing belief in conciliation. On the strength of Robinson's and Batman's activity, and the friendly approach by some Aborigines to Captain Welsh on the banks of the Tamar River, Arthur reversed the trend of official policy in two Government Orders issued on August 19 and 20. The first Order stressed the need for settlers and others to "abstain from acts of aggression against these "benighted beings", and urged conciliation rather than capture.³⁴ The second Order attempted to explain the government's intention in offering rewards for captured Aborigines:

The reward was offered for the capture of such natives only as were committing aggressions on the inhabitants of the settled districts, from which it was the object of the Government to

expel them, with every degree of humanity, that was practicable, when all efforts for their conciliation had proved abortive.³⁵

This conflicted with the wording of the original Order on rewards of February 25, where no such provisos were included. The new interpretation fitted Arthur's mood of conciliation.

* * * *

Opposition to these two Orders was immediate and strong. It sprang mainly from the Bothwell and Oatlands districts where a spate of Aboriginal attacks occurred soon after the publication of the Orders.³⁶ The Jericho jury at the inquest of the murdered James Hooper, presented a strong letter of protest to Arthur over the new trend in official policy. The jury felt that the previous February Government Order offering rewards for captured Aborigines together with the government's recent land grant to Thomas Anstey for his Aboriginal services, had "encouraged hopes of a favourable change of circumstances". The publication of the latest Government Order on rewards led to a feeling of "gloom, misery and apprehension", particularly as it contained a threat of legal prosecution. Energetic measures were needed, the letter concluded, to relieve the inhabitants of their "perilous condition".³⁷

Anstey, who probably had his hand in the Jericho jury letter, also sent his comments to Arthur on the latest Orders. According to Anstey, "considerable misunderstanding" existed in the community on the exact meaning of the new Orders. His own view was that

... the Aborigines are, now, irreclaimable, and that the coming Spring will be the most bloody that we have yet experienced - unless indeed,

the Soldiers, now about to proceed into the interior shall be sufficiently numerous to protect the settled Districts.³⁸

As proof of the increased hostile intentions of the Aborigines, he claimed that a "tame" Aborigine had informed him that the "Big River Mob" of about one hundred and fifty had "now divided into 10 or a dozen small mobs, the better to effect their purposes".³⁹

Arthur was concerned about the change in Aboriginal temper and the vocal opposition to the new Orders. However, it was at this juncture that he received a strongly worded despatch from the Secretary of State, Sir George Murray, on the proper steps to take to ensure friendly relations between Aborigines and colonists. The unmistakable message of the despatch was that conciliation should be continued at all costs. Not only was this just and humane, but it also concurred with the "policy and self-interest" of every colonist. The rub came when the details were outlined. "Nothing", wrote Murray,

... will tend more effectively to check the Evil than to bring before a Court of Justice every person who may have been instrumental to the death of a native,... You will take care that this be distinctly understood by all classes of persons in the Colony and that they may be made duly aware of the serious consequences that will result to any person against whom criminal prosecution may be undertaken,...⁴⁰

If Arthur was to follow these instructions, not only would the new Government Orders have to be upheld, but a further policy statement issued enlarging upon the inhabitants' legal responsibilities.

Arthur's use of the support of his Executive Council and various government committees to sanction possibly controversial measures throughout his administration, has been noted by West.⁴¹ This was no exception. The Aboriginal Committee met immediately to report on the propriety of the issue of the latest Government Orders. According to the Committee, there was no contradiction between the spirit of these documents and those issued earlier since the former were directed towards "pacifically inclined" Aborigines. It suggested that the thrust of future government policy should be towards "vigorous measures", since all past efforts at conciliation had proved "quite ineffectual".⁴² This advice was supported by the claim that almost all Aborigines in and around the settled districts were "actuated by the love of plunder, joined with the most rancorous animosity". Thus the Committee continued to fulfil its role as an unprincipled supporter of all changes in government Aboriginal policy whether towards conciliation or harsher measures.

Armed with the Committee's views, letters from Anstey and the Jericho jury and reports of attacks by Aborigines in the Bothwell-Oatlands area, Arthur called a meeting of the Executive Council. Discussion centred on the desirability of extending protection to settlers and of the possible impact of the publication of Murray's instructions.⁴³ The aim of the meeting was not to explore possible courses of action, but rather to provide a justification for a new offensive. Arthur began by outlining the alarm in the farming community arising from the upsurge in Aboriginal attacks, and the promulgation of the latest Government Orders. The situation placed him in a dilemma. If on the one hand he protected the settlers by instituting "offensive measures", he would incur "great responsibility" because of the latest instructions received

from Murray. If, on the other hand, he was to follow these instructions to the letter, he would have to abandon the settlers' safety.⁴⁴

The Council proved fully sensible to Arthur's difficult position. After "due deliberation", it was found that to issue Murray's instruction at the present stage of conflict would be "exceedingly impolitic, and would lead to the most unhappy results". These were exaggerated into the departure of great numbers of settlers from their farms or the suspension of their agricultural activities to "keep a continual watch under stress round their Dwellings". The strategy of conciliation was rejected *owing* to the Aborigines' treacherous character and their exceedingly *barbaric* manner of warfare.⁴⁵

In conclusion, the Council recommended that an unprecedented vigorous effort should be made to expel "these miserable people" from the settled districts once and for all. The full co-operation of settlers was assured since it was in their own interests. Such a proposal, the Council maintained, was painful but necessary for both the settlers and the Aborigines, who otherwise faced a "war of extermination".⁴⁶

Arthur and the Council members were fully sensible of the hazardous step taken in disregarding the directions of the Secretary of State. This is clear not only from the Executive Council minutes, but from subsequent correspondence between Arthur, Pedder and Burnett. When the despatch in reply to Murray's was composed some months later, they jointly decided that their decision to set

aside Murray's instructions would be more acceptable if alterations were made in the original minutes of the August 27 Executive Council meeting. Pedder supervised these. The altered minutes were included as an enclosure to the despatch. Unfortunately, the correspondence does not reveal the exact nature of the changes.⁴⁷

Not only were the minutes altered before they reached England, but the version of Arthur's despatch that reached the British public was a further compromise with the truth. All references to conflict between Arthur's policy and Murray's directives were omitted from the version of the despatch published in Military Operations.⁴⁸ Murray's despatch of April 23, containing the directives, did not appear at all. Thus the division between Arthur and Murray was obscured. Also, by not presenting Murray's proposed alternative strategy, Arthur's offensive was made to seem a less extreme course of action.

With the backing of the Aborigines Committee and the Executive Council, Arthur now initiated a policy that was directly opposed to Murray's instructions. His plans were contained in two new Government Orders. The first, issued on August 27, sought to modify the previous two August Orders. Wanton attacks by colonists on offensive tribes would be prosecuted, but the government did not expect settlers to act purely defensively. Hostile Aborigines were to be captured or driven out of the settled districts.⁴⁹

The second Government Order issued on September 9, announced plans for a major offensive to be undertaken against the Aborigines.⁵⁰ This was later known as the Black Line. Exact details of the move-

ment were not included in the Order, but its extended nature was clear from the call to all settlers to co-operate in the new venture which was to begin on October 7.

On September 22, a further Government Order was issued containing a detailed explanation of the coming operations. The plan was to place cordons of soldiers and civilians across the island either to capture the Aborigines or sweep them into the Tasman Peninsula. At first the area "south of a line drawn from Waterloo Point east, to Lake Echo west, including Hobart, Richmond, New Norfolk, Clyde and Oatlands Police District", was to be covered, but in later stages of the operations the rest of the settled districts were to be included. The plan of the campaign was described in the greatest detail in this Order, including the day to day movements of the proposed operation. The spirit of the Order resembled a general cry for war against the Aborigines. It was organized on a military basis with provision for a liberal supply of firearms. The operation of martial law was extended to cover every part of the island by a Proclamation issued on October 1, 1830.⁵¹ To cover himself against this interpretation of the Order, Arthur concluded with the usual footnote stressing restraint and humanity:

... the object in view is not to injure or destroy the unhappy savages,... but to capture and raise them in the scale of civilisation.⁵²

The successful outcome of the operations would protect settlers and the Aborigines who would be spared continued warfare and the "privations which the extension of the settlements would progressively entail...".

On first glance, Arthur's responsiveness to settler demands and the setting aside of instructions seems surprising, particularly as the history of his administration is one of rigid opposition to pressure from settlers, notable on the issue of non-penal political and legal institutions in the colony. Added to this was the particular emphasis that Arthur placed on the need to end Aboriginal/settler conflict in a way that was agreeable to the Colonial

Office:

... it [conflict] is my only remaining difficulty in the Government of any consequence, but it is a very great one... I am most exceedingly anxious of doing what is right, and of leaving no stain upon my administration.⁵³

Arthur's decision to undertake the Black Line must remain somewhat of a mystery. Part of the explanation was that unlike the institution of non-penal institutions, an aggressive Aboriginal policy did not contradict Arthur's conception of the nature of the colony. Certainly he did not believe that government policy should be directed primarily towards the interests of free settlers, but at the same time he realized that the insecurity of their situation was placing the successful development of the colony in some jeopardy and was an unfavourable reflection of his government's competence. His desire to protect settlers was reinforced by his belief that they, unlike the runaway convicts, were not responsible for initiating hostilities.⁵⁴ This led to Arthur's commitment to conciliation being conditional on its effectiveness in placing a break on Aboriginal hostility. Arthur, along with the other governors of Australian colonies before the mid-1830s, was well aware that his first priority was the safety and extension of white settlement.

By August 1830, Arthur had realized that the aims of conciliation and the ceasing of conflict were irreconcilable. He lacked a strong moral objection to an aggressive policy as evidenced in his contemplation of extirpation, if the situation demanded, in 1827.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Arthur had shown before that he was not immune to the peaks of hysteria that prevailed in the colony periodically. In 1826 and twice in 1828, Arthur strengthened government action in the face of growing alarm in the colony. Again in August and September 1830, when alarm spread through the colony, and Arthur responded, this time more dramatically than ever.

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Arthur's announcement of a major offensive against the Aborigines was greeted with a chorus of approval. All newspapers included editorials on the timeliness of the move, while country correspondents wrote of settlers "straining every nerve" to take part in the undertaking.⁵⁶ When the campaign began in early October, volunteer levels were high for the small colony. Three thousand men were in the field by early October.⁵⁷

The reasons for this enthusiastic support were confused. In a leading editorial, the Colonial Times manifested typically contradictory views. While supporting the scheme, the Colonial Times warned of the probable failure of the operations. Whatever the result however, one thing was certain: "Every individual in the island must directly or indirectly, be benefitted by the present operations." This was due to the "enormous sums... in the iron

chests of the Treasury" being put into circulation.⁵⁸ Thus, by his proposal of a large-scale operation against the Aborigines, Arthur had reached a responsive chord in the community. No doubt some settlers genuinely felt that the operations could reduce hostilities, but an equally strong motive in the support of the Black Line was this economic factor. During Arthur's administration, criticism had been continually levelled at the government for hoarding the colony's wealth.⁵⁹ Now it seemed that the community would at last benefit from an influx of government money into the community.

Colonists were also uncertain about the direction of the forthcoming operations. The Colonial Times admitted ignorance of the implications of the Government Order of September 9. Was the "sword or the Bible... destruction or civilization", to be the order of the day?⁶⁰ The Courier maintained that the Government Order implied only capture.⁶¹ Disclaiming the Courier's idealism, the Launceston Advertiser held that the movement could not be effective without bloodshed.⁶²

This uncertainty arose from Arthur's failure to spell out the exact nature of the offensive in his Government Orders. Even in his detailed Order of September 22, which underlined the military nature of the plan, the inclusion of appeals to humanity and justice, continued to confuse the issue.

Arthur's conception of the operations lay somewhere between that presented by the Courier and by the Launceston Advertiser. That Arthur did not intend the movement to be one of uncontrolled

killing seems clear. Government correspondence indicates that extermination was viewed as a likely result of the failure of the Black Line. Thus Burnett wrote to Arthur in early November of his wish to see the movement successful so that Arthur would be "spared the lamentable alternative of putting them to death".⁶³ No doubt Arthur anticipated some bloodshed in the campaign. The supply of arms to extreme anti-Aboriginal settlers and the military organization of the campaign could not fail to produce it. However, there seems no reason to question his claim that the operations were primarily orientated to capture, or driving the Aborigines into the Tasman Peninsula.

Public disquiet over the proposed operations surfaced at a public meeting in Hobart in late September. The meeting was ostensibly called to organize a Civilian Town Guard for Hobart so that the present guard could be released for military duties in the coming operations. However, discussion centred on the suitability of the proposed military drive against the Aborigines and the legal position of the participants if they were involved in killing Aborigines. It was one of the few times a pro-Aboriginal voice was evident in public discussion.

Gellibrand took the initiative early in the meeting. Sidestepping the issue of the Town Guard, he spoke of the immorality of the forthcoming operations which he termed "a war of extermination". He pointed to the absence of legal sanction for indiscriminate killing of Aborigines:

I do not understand how it is possible, under the law as it now stands, for any man who has not committed a felony, to be killed if he

cannot be captured... any individual who should shed the blood of one of these unhappy people would... in the present state of the law, be guilty of murder.⁶⁴

The Solicitor General, Alfred Stephen, declared that Gellibrand's comments were not relevant to the present meeting whose sole aim was the formation of a Town Guard.

Others at the meeting were prepared to take up Gellibrand's challenge. Horne, moving the second resolution on the Town Guard, spoke of the need to present the white side as well as the black: "Surely he [Gellibrand] cannot have forgotten the graves of the two children who were recently so barbarously murdered?" According to the Tasmanian's report, which was later criticized for inaccuracy, Horne then stated that he considered extermination a necessity given the state of terror in the colony. Dr. Turnbull, who moved the third resolution, forcefully backed up Horne's argument. Extermination, he claimed, was a preferable alternative to the present situation where the blacks were being eliminated by "a lingering warfare".

Stephen now felt so agitated over Gellibrand's questioning of the basis of Arthur's Aboriginal policy, that he entered the debate. Speaking from his "own private individual sentiments", and not as a public officer, he gave his support to Horne's argument. He added further that it was the duty of the government and all free citizens to protect the convicts, who through no fault of their own, "are exposed to the hourly loss of their lives". Humanity demanded their protection by whatever method seemed necessary, "and if you cannot do so without extermination, then I say boldly and broadly exterminate!".

Apart from a short speech by a Mr. Hackett in support of a more conciliatory emphasis in Aboriginal policy, Gellibrand gained no other backers. The only other dissident voice at the meeting was Robert Lathrop Murray's. He objected to the method of formation of a Standing Committee to carry out the resolutions passed at the meeting. According to Murray, the 'nominated' Committee did not represent the "body of the people".

In the next few weeks, a bitter press debate ensued over the accuracy of the Tasmanian's report of the meeting. Dr. Turnbull claimed in a letter to the Courier that he had been totally misrepresented. His comments had been inspired by considerations of humanity and not by "bloodthirsty" sentiments as the report had implied. Notwithstanding this, the best interests of the Aborigines required strong action:

I would not with an affection of mawkish sensibility, unregulated by reason, shrink from the shedding of blood, if that alternative be necessary, for the only means of preserving the Aborigines is... to dismay them so that revenge may be drowned in terror.⁶⁵

Part of the reason for this controversy was the loose use of the term "extermination". Generally those at the meeting who advocated extermination in the coming operations did not mean the wiping out of the total Aboriginal population. Rather the use of bloody methods at times when capture was difficult was implied.

The Colonial Times and the Tasmanian were quick to vouch for the accuracy of the report. Realizing that their printed version of the meeting was proving awkward to Dr. Turnbull and others who

had spoken too freely in the debate, they used the issue to further embarrass the speakers and attack the pro-government paper, the Courier. Much abuse was directed at Dr. Turnbull and the Courier for their attack on the accuracy of the report. On October 8, the Tasmanian devoted seven full columns to the issue.⁶⁶ In the welter of personal criticism, the issue of the morality of the Black Line was obscured. Even the Tasmanian's criticism of Turnbull's advocacy of extermination was somewhat hollow since the paper itself had supported the same policy in 1828. The Aboriginal issue had become one of expediency, a useful weapon for the anti-Arthur forces to attack influential government supporters and their newspaper, the Courier.

Gellibrand's principled opposition to the Black Line was thus isolated. Even Robinson did not oppose the operations although he was skeptical about their chance of success.⁶⁷ The only other individual who resisted the swell of support was Thomas Gregson. When Thomas Salmon travelled through Gregson's farming district on instructions from Anstey to ascertain the number of assigned servants that landholders would release for duty in the operations, he was told by Gregson's neighbour, James Tolman, that it would be useless to attempt to persuade Gregson to send his servants. Tolman had already been informed by Gregson that he

... totally disapproved and reprobated the whole system carrying on against the Blacks considering it altogether illegal, cruel and bloody, adding those who went out to kill the Blacks would just as soon kill and murder the white man.⁶⁸

Such reasoning was beyond Anstey who, upon reading Salmon's account of Gregson's sentiments, declared that Gregson must be "decidedly mad".⁶⁹

On October 4, under Arthur's direction, the great march across the island began. Volunteers and military forces commenced to move in cordons southward towards the Tasman Peninsula. Rumours on their progress filtered through to Hobart. Less than a week after the beginning of the march, Burnett wrote to Arthur that "a thousand vague and absurd reports of 'Battles fought and captives taken' are in circulation".⁷⁰ The press had little authentic information. Instead, anecdotes of the Line were printed and hysteria whipped up against the Aborigines.

By the end of the second week, rumours reaching town were uniformly pessimistic and reports were received of Aboriginal attacks in the rear of the Line,⁷¹ indicating that at least one group must have slipped through the cordons. The escape of seven Aborigines from a party under Walpole further dampened hopes for success.⁷² The futility of a highly organized military drive against scattered tribes who had a superior knowledge of the bush was soon abundantly clear to all but Arthur, who pressed on zealously with the ill-conceived scheme.⁷³

The growing lack of seriousness with which the colony viewed the operations was paralleled in the Civilian Town Guard's slackening dedication to its duties. At first, the town's gentlemen conducted the Guard with vigilance and zeal. Burnett, who remained in Hobart throughout the operations, wrote enthusiastically of Mr. Kemp's efforts between two and three in the morning to apprehend a "drunken Baker in Elizabeth Street who was amusing himself with a gun".⁷⁴ Two weeks later, Burnett informed Arthur of the scenes of "eating and jollity" in the town's gaol. There was some difficulty in rectifying the situation. The Sheriff and Burnett

found the behaviour "objectionable and improper", but could not act "without offending the Gentlemen".⁷⁵

Rumours of a white traitor assisting the Aborigines had found currency in the colony during periods of intense conflict. Reports of such a possibility were now common in the press.⁷⁶ A scapegoat theory was convenient in accounting for the persistent hostility of the Aborigines and their successful foiling of all government measures. Arthur now seemed convinced of its likelihood. He directed Burnett to investigate the background of a convict named Browne, believed to be now among the Aborigines. Burnett found that Browne had disappeared after escaping from Macquarie Harbour in 1825 and was probably now out of the country. He was therefore unlikely to be the culprit.⁷⁷ Another unnamed prisoner who had also escaped from Macquarie Harbour in 1825 was then suspected, but nothing was proved.⁷⁸ This sidelight provided a favourite subject for discussion during the Line. Much frustration with the present operations was vented onto this mythical white villain. The Chief Justice, Pedder, concluded that if any "white fiends in human shape" were among the Aborigines, he would "shoot them on the spot".⁷⁹

As the campaign continued into its second month, it became increasingly clear that most of the Aborigines had slipped through the cordons. When it was finally abandoned in early December, there were only two captives - an old man and a boy. Those who had viewed the Line as an effective counter to the Aborigines, reacted angrily. The Courier reiterated the wild claims made by Horne at the September Town Guard meeting. If the campaign was not success-

ful, readers were told they "must abandon the island... [and] look for safety only to our ships that will carry us to another shore".⁸⁰ The gravity of the situation demanded the employment of "unusual" methods:

... those blacks who are now in custody... should be taken singly, and well secured by a rope or chain, and compelled to lead the roving parties to the haunts of their countrymen... and if prudently dealt with [and] threatened, they would not fail to guide their parties.⁸¹

An episode which confirmed these sentiments occurred in the north east of the island during the Black Line. Arthur had specially exempted this area from military activity, so that some Aboriginal women who were conducting conciliatory activities would escape interference.⁸² On October 16, the two Aboriginal women whom Batman had sent out, returned to his farm with nine Aboriginal males.⁸³ According to Major Gray, who visited Batman's farm, they seemed willing to stay.⁸⁴ Conversations with their Chief, Limogana, led Gray to hope that the tribe could be induced to co-operate and bring in further Aborigines. Gray spoke enthusiastically of the tribesmen, describing them as "cheerful and of good statures".⁸⁵

A week after their arrival, Gray retracted these views. The Aborigines had disappeared from Batman's, taking his knives and dogs while discarding his presents of blankets and clothes.⁸⁶ Batman, who at last seemed to have success within his reach, was frantic and had given up all hope of "doing any good with them".⁸⁷ Gray was more hopeful of their return.

There was worse to come. On November 1, Gray reported that many robberies had taken place in the area of Batman's farm. Two attacking Aborigines had been shot. Gray was now attempting to determine if one of them belonged to the runaway tribe.⁸⁸ Burnett refused to consider such a possibility. His main concern was for the tribe's safety amongst so many hostile white parties.⁸⁹ Arthur received the news of the escape while with the military parties at Sorell Rivulet. He commented that their behaviour was extraordinary and his disappointment was "quite impossible to describe". He also could not bring himself to believe that the recent attacks were committed by the escaped Aborigines who were "treated so kindly".⁹⁰ On November 11, Gray reported that his worst suspicions had been confirmed. The body of an Aborigine had been found and identified as "one of those ungrateful savages who came to Batman's".⁹¹

The failure of the Line and the escape and later outrages committed by Batman's Aborigines combined temporarily to harden opinion against the Aborigines. The Tasmanian printed a typical letter from a settler who advocated hunting them down "like wild beasts for they are worse than any we have on the island".⁹² Burnett, angered at the activities of the runaway Aborigines, felt that the settlers' only chance of safety was the "extermination of these wretched beings".⁹³ Arthur's long despatch to Murray, written a few days prior to the completion of the Line and after news of the escaped Aborigines' outrages, was similar in content, although more controlled in tone.⁹⁴

At an Executive Council meeting on November 30, Arthur presented

his conclusions on the future prospects for Aboriginal policy. He felt that ventures similar to the Black Line would be fruitless due to the difficult terrain and the Aborigines' superior "keen senses". He now proposed placing a force of men in small parties in remote stock huts. Aboriginal attacks on these would provide good opportunities for capturing or shooting the chiefs and the more daring. Finally he advocated that Conditional Pardons and Tickets of Leave should be given to convicts who rendered effective service against the Aborigines, even if this involved killing.⁹⁵

For most colonists, the ending of the Line was a time for rejoicing. The common criterion for success was financial benefit for the colony and the campaign had more than fulfilled expectations. According to Melville, £35,000 had been spent by the Arthur government in less than two months.⁹⁶ Once the campaign was over, the contempt felt for Arthur's military venture was openly expressed. The Times declared that the methods used were inconsistent with "the commonsense of a child". It had not been opportune to express these sentiments earlier:

... the very drawing out of the Treasury the enormous sums of money really belonging to the Colonists, is of itself the greatest ultimatum at which we looked, and which we considered as the only benefit likely to be produced by the outré scheme, and which it was in the interest of all parties to encourage.⁹⁷

If the Line could have continued for another month or two then the "golden harvest would have made Pittwater a town of no little importance".⁹⁸ The Tasmanian rejoiced that the circulation of large sums of government money enabled the colony to avoid the "ruinous depredation" prevalent in NSW.⁹⁹ The favourable economic

effect of the Line was also evident in the rise in property prices in the interior.¹⁰⁰

In his unpublished autobiography, John Helder Wedge described the cynical attitude of settlers towards Arthur's venture. As a Land Commissioner he had been actually involved in the organization of the Line. He wrote of settlers reaping great benefits from high meat and flour prices during October and November. To maximize profits, efforts were made to detain the forces as long as possible:

... recourse was resorted to of spreading false reports of the Natives being seen daily - and thus the L-G was induced to keep the forces stationary for upwards of three weeks instead of advancing according to his original plan.¹⁰¹

Although the scheme was generally ridiculed, the financial benefits prompted many country residents to present Addresses to Arthur in December and January.¹⁰² A public meeting was even held in Hobart to commend Arthur on his organization of the operations.¹⁰³ Only two people at the meeting spoke against the absurdity of the situation where, according to Melville, "colonists had turned crazy".¹⁰⁴ One was Thomas Gregson, who had earlier been a rare opponent of the scheme. Although he was refused permission to move an amendment at the meeting, he insisted on speaking:

The vote is for His Excellency's personal exertions. I do not attempt to deny them, but there is such a thing as being actually mischievous. A man may go to the top of Mt. Wellington with a harpoon in his hand to kill a whale, but would not such be absurd.¹⁰⁵

William Penn ridiculed the sentiments of the meeting:

... I could not have anticipated... that the barefaced farce of public meetings would be resorted to, to assist and increase the fulsome adulation of the poor, prostrate, servile PRESS, in presenting congratulatory addresses for the capture of one poor black boy!¹⁰⁶

Before the end of January, 1831, only two months after the completion of the Black Line and Arthur's toughening in attitude towards the Aborigines, government policy underwent another reversal. Conciliation once again became the dominant theme. Two factors induced the change. The first was the abating of hostilities in the weeks after the Line.¹⁰⁷ This was unexpected as the Line's visible results had been so dismal. To Arthur's "great satisfaction", the formerly hostile south eastern tribes seemed dismayed and terrorized by the presence of an army of white soldiers and civilians. Throughout 1831, the level of hostilities remained much lower in the area.¹⁰⁸ Arthur realized that a policy of shooting "chiefs and daring Aborigines" would only aggravate the presently passive tribes. Local police magistrates were therefore instructed to attempt "some further means of conciliation".¹⁰⁹

At this time of reduced hostility, Robinson returned to Hobart half way through his second expedition. Between October and December 1830, Robinson and his party of friendly Aborigines and white assistants had travelled extensively in the north west of VDL. In terms of numbers captured, this expedition had been far more successful than the Black Line. During November, he had captured thirteen Aborigines in the bush and removed a further three from the Bass Strait sealers. His associate, James Parish, had

taken eleven from sealers.¹¹⁰ Together with seven Aborigines from his own party, Robinson had placed the captured Aborigines on Swan Island.¹¹¹ His work was tangible proof of the possible effectiveness of an alternative policy.

To secure these Aborigines and transfer them to Swan Island, Robinson had used a combination of bribery, deception and fear. He disclosed this in a description of a meeting with a group of Aborigines contained in his February 1831 Report to Arthur:

I now disclosed to them in ample terms the whole purport of my visit,... I then described to them the nature and formation of the Line by tracing it on the ground with a stick, and further informed them that the mighty enemy... would shortly appear in formidable array in front of their own territory... I proposed to them to accompany me to Swan Island as a place of security...¹¹²

In his journal he described how his tales of soldiers killing blacks had occasioned such fear that the whole group decided they "would not stop on any account". They even agreed to abandon two stray Aborigines of their tribe.¹¹³ The same journal entry mentioned the giving of presents as inducements and Robinson's affectation of indifference as to whether they accompanied him. Arthur was elated at the news of the captures, but warned Robinson of the "utmost importance" of keeping them in captivity. The absconding of Batman's Aborigines was still fresh in his mind.¹¹⁴

To consider the implications of Robinson's success for government policy, Arthur directed that the Aboriginal Committee re-assemble in early February.¹¹⁵ The Committee commended Robinson for his recent work. In opening amicable intercourse with the Aborigines,

Robinson had manifested "the most daring intrepidity, perservering zeal and strenuous exertion".¹¹⁶ The Committee's Report recorded Robinson's confidence in his ability to effect the removal of "the entire black population".¹¹⁷ They recommended a salary of £250 per year to date from his appointment and a gift of £100.

Robinson's success and the general dampening of hostilities after the Black Line threw doubt on the wisdom of Arthur's existing plans for renewed harsh strategems. In the light of this, the Committee deliberated at length on the best means of protecting settlers. Their final conclusion was to recommend a reversal in the present policy to enable Robinson's conciliatory method to be implemented. They suggested the appointment of an assistant for Robinson. Finally the Committee advised that roving parties should be abandoned as their activities only roused Aboriginal hostility.¹¹⁸

The Executive Council considered the Committee's Report on February 23. Further evidence was heard directly from Robinson who attended the meeting. All major aspects of the Report were accepted, for Robinson's success and the general abatement of hostilities had won Arthur to conciliation.¹¹⁹ Arthur even increased the Committee's recommendation for Robinson's reward by including a land grant of 2,560 acres free from all conditions and restrictions.¹²⁰

The close of the Black Line period thus marked a new era in government policy towards the Aborigines. The conciliatory approach advocated by Robinson and approved by Arthur, became the keystone for future policy. Large scale military ventures and strident

government notices and proclamations calling on colonists to resist Aboriginal attacks were at an end. Even the press avoided their usual tirades against the Aborigines and the inadequacy of government measures. In May, 1831, the Tasmanian explained the rationale behind the exclusion of reported Aboriginal attacks, for there were certainly some incidents:

... we have seen with great regret, the exaggerated manner in which the Colonial newspapers' statements have been treated in the British Journals, thereby very materially injuring the Colony and stopping the course of emigration.¹²¹

The second reason advanced - that Arthur had done all he could by the Black Line - was probably just as important.¹²² In other words, anti-government papers could no longer make political capital out of the issue.

A public meeting called in May, 1831, to consider the inadequacies of the present government system, attempted to revive the debate by including a resolution on the Aborigines question. The motion pointed to Arthur's failure to conciliate or "enlighten" the Aborigines or prevent their excesses. However, this was an isolated episode and in keeping with past experience, the Aboriginal issue was obscured in other political squabbles.¹²³

The adoption of Robinson's conciliatory plan gave hope that settlers would cease to be molested by Aborigines in the near future. The essence of the scheme was not the solving of disputes that produced warfare, but the removal of the Aborigines from the scene of conflict. Already Robinson had thirty four Aborigines on Swan Island,¹²⁴ and if his success continued, there would be

more. The question of the future of these Aborigines was thus thrown into sharp relief. Complete expatriation, advocated by the press since 1826, would seem to be the logical extension of Robinson's work. However, the disposal of the bulk of the island's native inhabitants to permanent captivity rested uneasily on the minds of some who were responsible for the final decision on the future of the race.

The division within the government on the removal issue was paralleled in the colonial press during 1831. Up to this date, the topic had been summarily treated; writers had considered it self-evident that this was the only rational solution to the Aborigines' continual destruction and murders. Advocacy of the idea was rationalized on the grounds that the scheme was humane, since a small island retreat would curb the Aborigines' savage propensities and promote civilization.

The Colonial Times initiated a major consideration of the rights of the Aborigines in a two part article published in April, 1830.¹²⁵ Its unusually detailed coverage led Rev. T.H. Braim from NSW to rely almost solely on this article in presenting his justification for removal of the Aborigines in his draft to a book on the Tasmanian Aborigines in the mid-1830s.¹²⁶ Beginning with a discussion of the "law of God", the Times concluded that the Aborigines held an inherent right and property in the soil. This right was not indefensible, but must yield to other subordinate branches of the "law of God".¹²⁷ This led to a consideration of the "law of necessity" which sanctioned overcrowded nations of Europe seeking "countries where they may produce subsistence by industrious means". The Aborigines were seriously compared to the

kings and nobility of England who in past days unfairly

... appropriated large forests and tracts of lands for the purpose of hunting; yet there are some who contend that a thousand Aborigines of this Island possess a positive right to convert an Island of equal size with Ireland into a vast hunting ground.¹²⁸

Thus the Colonial Times concluded that the Aborigines were completely unjustified in their belligerent stance towards the white presence: "No inherent right... can possibly give a privilege to a handful of savages, to exclude thousands of people from obtaining an honest livelihood." The various Aboriginal grievances were dismissed and the government criticized for overprotection. It was claimed that respect for Aboriginal liberty had been taken too far and that the Aborigines were no longer entitled to any protection whatsoever.¹²⁹

Both the Colonial Times and the Courier continued to advocate removal throughout 1830 and 1831. The policy actually became synonymous with humanitarianism. Not only would the settlers benefit from the Aborigines absence, but removal would be the basis "of one of the grandest exploits that men can perform, it would convert a savage miserable race into a colony of comparatively enlightened useful men".¹³⁰ Even William Penn, the only correspondent who consistently supported the Aborigines in the press, now advocated removal:

I am not friend Tasmanian so 'mawkish' as to retain the opinions expressed in my former letter about these black brethern, I do therefore advise to have them captured, and so disposed of as to make them useful to themselves in the first instance, and ultimately to the Colony.¹³¹

The Tasmanian, which had advocated a similar policy on removal through this period, abruptly changed its position in June, 1831. The reversal was reminiscent of its position in 1828, when in the midst of widespread support for removal, the paper had opposed the notion. In the latest article opposing removal, it was felt necessary to prove that the Aborigines were not animals, a difficult task in VDL:

We know that it is a very delicate subject: -
we know that to consider these unhappy HUMAN
BEINGS, as any other than 'wild beasts' would
subject us to sneers from some - laughter from
others - and opposition from all.¹³²

To establish the point, a British review of Davison's book, Australia, was quoted. The importance given to the subject and the favourable depiction of Aboriginal society in the book and the review, led the Tasmanian to a consideration of the injustice of colonists "murdering their fellow men to possess themselves of their property". The claim that the Aborigines had no rights because they were on the lowest scale of the human race was rejected. The ordering of men in descending scale was purely arbitrary: "The Aborigines will perhaps at the great day of investigation stand loftily pre-eminent."

Since the Aborigines were human beings, proprietors of the land they occupied and not under allegiance to the British government, the Tasmanian concluded that colonists had no right to capture and transport Aborigines or to execute them for violation of British laws:

It is quite clear that they have not been conquered to submission, without which the mere over-running of their country, gives no right over their persons.¹³³

The article maintained that the government and colonists had erred in believing that an instant end to conflict was possible. The experience of the Indians of North America was quoted to illustrate that the only rational policy was a slow one of resistance to attack and conciliation to gain peace.¹³⁴

Six years later, when the bulk of the Aborigines had been transported, the Tasmanian re-iterated the same view. The scheme of removal was "extravagantly expensive - extremely cruel - and wholly fruitless, unless with a view to the extermination of these hapless beings...".¹³⁵ It was significant that, although the mode of treatment and disposal of the Aboriginal population was strongly criticized by the Tasmanian, it was assumed that the British had a natural right to the possession of as much of the island that they could profitably use. Aboriginal aggression in these areas could justifiably be resisted and all Aborigines residing there were liable to their laws. The right of European colonists to settle in areas inhabited by nomadic hunting tribes was thus defended.

Although the pressure of public opinion led Arthur to consider the removal of the Aboriginal population as early as 1828, the scheme had seemed too radical and inhuman to contemplate at that stage. Accordingly, Arthur had written to Goderich in January, 1828, that the proposal would only aggravate already existing grievances and make the Aborigines ill-disposed to "instruction".¹³⁶

Even the forced positioning of the Aborigines in one area on the island was rejected. There was too much inter-tribal hostility to make this practical.¹³⁷ As the conflict intensified and more aggressive government measures were proposed, including rewards for captured Aborigines, Arthur still made no long term plans for the future of Aborigines received into government protection. There were efforts to re-establish the Bruny Island settlement with a view to a permanent reception centre in late 1829, but these lapsed with Robinson's first expedition in January, 1830. The results of this failure to study the implications of the policy of capture were evident in March, 1830, when the sickness and eventual death of two captured Aboriginal women led the Aboriginal Committee to recommend the release of the remaining women. This was one month after the offering of rewards for captured Aborigines.¹³⁸

Although the aim of the Black Line was to capture all the hostile tribes in the south east of VDL, throughout this period there was still no discussion of the question of the eventual disposal of captured Aborigines. However, during the Line, a strong commitment to segregation emerged. The "treacherous" conduct of Batman's runaway Aborigines re-inforced support for this. According to a Government Order issued on November 26, the behaviour of these Aborigines demonstrated

... that it would be in vain to expect any reformation of these savages, while allowed to continue in their native habits... the Government... [will consider] whether it will not be proper to place those who are now secured, and who amount to about thirty, together with any others who may be captured, upon an island whence they cannot escape.¹³⁹

Robinson's assertion that he could remove the entire Aboriginal population led to the first serious discussion in government circles of the propriety of such a scheme in February, 1831. Robinson's success in capturing Aborigines at the time of the dramatic failure of the Black Line, meant that his opinions now carried weight. In an address to the Aboriginal Committee and the Executive Council, he claimed that the Aboriginal population did not exceed seven hundred and that in three years he could effect their voluntary removal.¹⁴⁰ He asserted that a reconciliation between Aborigines and settlers on the island was impossible since the Aborigines could not be induced to retire to unsettled areas or refrain from attacks. According to the minutes of the Executive Council meeting of February 23, 1831, Robinson did much to further the current unfavourable image of Aborigines. He was "aware that the Natives can distinguish between stock-keepers and settlers, and attack the latter although they are conscious of not having received any injury from them". He painted a highly favourable view of the advantages of a separate island settlement and discounted the possible negative factors:

... they would not feel themselves imprisoned there or pine away in consequence of the restraint, nor would they wish to return to the main land, or regret their inability to hunt and roam about in the manner they had previously done in the island.¹⁴¹

The Aborigines' attachment to their tribal areas, a point which Robinson had previously noted,¹⁴² was not even considered. According to his statement to the Executive Council, their life, which he characterized as fishing, dancing, singing and throwing spears, could be continued happily anywhere.¹⁴³

Only Pedder dissented. In opposition to Robinson, he claimed that the Aborigines would strongly resent permanent removal from their homeland. He maintained that Robinson's success should lead to hope for a treaty with the tribes, and not to considerations of expatriation.¹⁴⁴

At a second Executive Council meeting held on March 14, 1831, and in his subsequent despatch, Arthur countered Pedder's misgivings about the removal policy.¹⁴⁵ He re-iterated Robinson's claim that the Aborigines were too treacherous to be relied on in any agreement with the whites. Added to this was the lack of control over large sections of the white population to prevent provocation against the Aborigines. Arthur concluded from this that removal was the only way to prevent future conflict. He attempted to minimize the drastic nature of the proposal by referring to the small number of Aborigines involved, the lack of force associated with the scheme and the compensations for the Aborigines: "Food and clothing, and above all, instruction in civilization." In dismissing Pedder's views, he demonstrated that he was aware of the implications of this argument:

... even if they should pine away in the manner that the Colonial Justice apprehends, it is better that they should meet with their death in that way, whilst every act of kindness is manifested towards them, than that they should fall sacrifice to the inevitable consequence of their continued acts of outrage upon the white inhabitants.¹⁴⁶

The British government gave wholehearted support to the policy of removal of the Aborigines from their homeland. Murray's forebodings of the "indelible stain upon the character of the British government" resulting from the extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines,

were brushed aside by Viscount Goderich, his successor as Secretary of State. Goderich showed no awareness of the enormity of the moral and physical problems involved in the resettlement of a people. Instead, Arthur's despatches, which were pervaded with a tone of humanity for the misguided and declining people, appealed to Goderich who took every opportunity to congratulate Arthur on the success of his Aboriginal policies and their "humane and Christian temper".¹⁴⁷

Only one event threatened to mar the success of the strategy of removal through persuasion or capture. This was the killing of Captain Bartholomew Boyle Thomas and his overseer, James Parker by the Aborigines near Port Sorell in September, 1831. It was the latest of a number of fatal attacks on respectable settlers and their families in northern Tasmania. Mrs. Cunningham died of wounds inflicted at East Arm on March 12 and Michael Fitzgerald, a settler on the Turner, died of wounds inflicted on April 6.¹⁴⁸ The manner of death and the social position of Captain Thomas made the latest killings of far greater concern. Captain Thomas, who had come to VDL in 1826, was the younger brother of the Colonial Treasurer, Jocelyn Henry Connor Thomas. He held property at Northdown and was active in the formation of the Cressy Company. His overseer, James Parker, held property at Elizabeth Town. At the time of their deaths, the two men had apparently been conducting a friendly overture with some Aborigines. Thomas was unarmed while Parker had a gun.¹⁴⁹

The timing of the attack at the beginning of spring, made it ominous for the level of warfare in the coming summer when Aboriginal hostility was normally at its height: "Who can tell to

what lengths they may run this season, beyond all precedence, in taking vengeance upon the settlers for the routing they experienced by the 'Line' business?"¹⁵⁰ As usual, the government was called upon to initiate aggressive moves to forestall future depredations.¹⁵¹ The growing violent mood was noted by the Aboriginal Committee which warned of the possibility of colonists, either individually or in groups, taking their own action against the Aborigines.¹⁵² In the press, the call for extermination was again raised.¹⁵³ The jury at the inquest on Thomas and Parker demonstrated their belief in the danger and futility of Arthur's present policies:

We find that Bartholomew Boyle Thomas and James Parker have been treacherously murdered by the three native men now in custody ■■■ during the most friendly intercourse and whilst endeavouring to carry into effect the conciliatory measures recommended by the government.¹⁵⁴

The feeling in the colony resembled that of February, 1830, when a spate of attacks in the Clyde area took place. This time Arthur did not deviate from his conciliatory approach through the pressure of rancorous colonists demanding Aboriginal blood. The failure of the Black Line and other harsh military measures had convinced Arthur of the futility of such methods. Also Robinson's capture of seven Aborigines¹⁵⁵ just prior to the Thomas and Parker killings, had revived his faith in Robinson's ability to remove the entire Aboriginal population. Before these captures, Robinson's efforts had been regarded with growing skepticism in government circles. This was due to his lack of quick success in capturing Aboriginal tribes¹⁵⁶ and his overenthusiasm in removing Aboriginal women from Bass Strait sealers whom

Arthur believed might be of assistance in capturing more Aborigines.¹⁵⁷ Thus, in a conference held with Robinson in early October, after the Thomas and Parker deaths, Arthur gave full support to Robinson and agreed to all his recommendations regarding his future work.¹⁵⁸

The final Aboriginal Committee Report, drawn up after the September killings, confirmed the trend in policy. This was particularly significant since the Chairman of the Committee was Jocelyn Thomas, the brother of the murdered Captain Thomas. The report began in the usual way by stressing the "treachery and perfidy" of the Aborigines. They were deemed

... insensible to kindness, devoid of generous feeling, bent on revenge, and determined to pursue their plundering and murderous courses with the same indiscriminate hostility that they have hitherto done.¹⁵⁹

However, no action commensurate with these sentiments was proposed. Instead, the Committee maintained that the Black Line had proved that force as a tactic was ineffective and that the "only course left" was the continuation of the work of the conciliatory parties under the direction of Robinson.¹⁶⁰ The Report underlined the rationale for removal as the final solution to the Aboriginal question. The policy was seen as the only effective method of eliminating conflict and protecting settlers. It was not adopted because it was a preferable humane alternative to harsher options.

* * * *

For the next three years, between August 1831, and August 1834, government policy towards the Aborigines concentrated on the

capture of Aborigines remaining free in the colony and the administration of Aboriginal settlements. The former aim was achieved primarily by Robinson in four expeditions. The first, in the eastern side of the colony, was the shortest and its success assured Robinson of firm support from the government and settlers. On October 15, Robinson left Campbell Town with a party of about twenty Aborigines and white servants to capture the Big River tribe.¹⁶¹ This south eastern tribe was the most hostile in the colony. On December 31, a few miles north west of Lake Echo, he contacted the remnant of the Big River and Oyster Bay tribes, twenty six Aborigines in all.¹⁶² He persuaded them to place themselves under his protection. The exact circumstances of the capture are unclear as Robinson failed to write up his diary for the crucial days. Other reports indicate the circumstances were probably peaceful and non-forceful.¹⁶³ Due to this success, Robinson received a promise for a government reward of £1,000 for the capture of the total Aboriginal population.¹⁶⁴

Robinson's next expedition to the north western tribes covered most of 1832. The year was one of Robinson's most difficult. His party experienced a physical attack by some VDL Company employees on the night of May 13, resulting from a developing row with the Company.¹⁶⁵ The hostility of a western tribe led to an attempt to kill him at Arthur River in September, 1832.¹⁶⁶ Also during this year, Robinson was forced into an awareness of the possible conflict between the Aborigines' expressed desires and the needs of government policy. The Aborigines he had placed on Hunter and then on Swan Island were dissatisfied with their confinement and told Robinson of their wish to return to the mainland.¹⁶⁷ Robin-

son justified his maintenance of enforced captivity by the paternalistic assertion that "they are in the situation of children not capable to judge what is best for themselves".¹⁶⁸ In terms of numbers of Aborigines captured, the north western expedition was very successful. In June and July he captured twenty three Aborigines and in September a further four.¹⁶⁹ During November, Cottrell, a colleague of Robinson, captured a group of seven Aborigines at Arthur River.¹⁷⁰ This group had participated in the attack on Robinson in September.

Robinson concentrated next on the region of Macquarie Harbour in an expedition during 1833. During this period he captured almost fifty Aborigines and Cottrell secured a further eight.¹⁷¹ This time his use of force was quite open. When some Aborigines refused to accompany him in May, 1833, his party, armed with guns and spears, surrounded them.¹⁷² Twice in July, Robinson's party again forcibly secured tribes.¹⁷³ Many of those captured died of disease at Macquarie Harbour in extremely depressing and sometimes horrific circumstances.¹⁷⁴

Undaunted by the shift in mission from conciliation to subjugation, Robinson pressed on with his final expedition in December, 1833. His early idealism and enthusiasm had largely dissipated. After almost five years in the bush, he longed for the completion of his task and his reward. On this last expedition, he described his existence as "wretched and vegetating".¹⁷⁵ However, he was convinced that only two groups remained at large. In February, March and April, 1834, he rounded up the remnants of the west coast tribes. These now numbered only twenty.¹⁷⁶ However, Robinson

failed to make contact with a small group believed to inhabit the Surrey Hills. He left his two sons to complete this task in August, 1834. In December, 1835, George Robinson reported the capture of this group.¹⁷⁷ In February, 1835, Robinson declared that "the entire aboriginal population are now removed".¹⁷⁸ Long negotiation and procrastination on the part of the Colonial Government ensued, and it was not until after Arthur's departure in October, 1836, that Robinson and his sons received large financial rewards and land grants.¹⁷⁹

Robinson's capture of almost the total Aboriginal population was a remarkable feat. His success was due partly to his perserverance against enormous odds and his skill in manipulating Aborigines. As Plomley has pointed out, several other factors contributed to the decline of the Tasmanian Aborigines as a viable tribal-based people during the late 1820s and early 1830s.¹⁸⁰ Disease and the distortion of the breeding pattern through the abduction of women and sterility resulting from venereal disease had greatly reduced their numbers. Also, white killings and a decrease in hunting areas through rapid settlement had hastened decline. The fundamental disruption of tribal life and the fear and confusion engendered by the whites' behaviour often led to ready acceptance of Robinson's offer of protection. If any suspicions remained, Robinson was willing to use force to capture them as his 1833 experiences revealed.

The other side of government policy after 1831 was the administration of Aboriginal settlements for captured Aborigines. In the early years, these were plagued by the difficulty in finding a suitable site and shortage of food supplies. At first, captured

Aborigines were placed on Swan Island in November, 1830. Unwholesome water and shortage of food made this position unsuitable,¹⁸¹ so the Aborigines were transferred first to Preservation Island, and then a few days later to Gun Carriage Island in March, 1831. Further reports of starvation led to the Aborigines' removal to Flinders Island in October, 1831.¹⁸² After an initial settlement at the Lagoons on the south western edge of the island, a permanent settlement was established a year later, further north at 'Wybalenna'. Changes in administration were as common as changes in sites. Between 1831 and 1835, command of the settlement passed from Dr. Maclaclan to Sergeant Wight to Lieutenant Darling to Henry Nickolls to Robinson.

Constant Aboriginal deaths on the settlements exemplified the difficulties involved in transferring a tribal-based people to fixed settlement. The high death rate seems to have been caused by loss of identity and will to live, together with tuberculosis and pneumonia.¹⁸³ Adequate preventative action to control disease was hindered by contemporary medical ignorance. Yet not even the basic physical needs of the Aborigines were provided for. Twice during Lieutenant Darling's term,¹⁸⁴ and once in Nickolls',¹⁸⁵ total lack of food on the settlement led the Aborigines to go bush in search of food.¹⁸⁶ Until Robinson took charge of the settlement in October, 1835, neglect was the prevailing attitude of both the local commandants and the government. Administration was chaotic and in the hands of constantly bickering officials. Disputes revolved around irrelevancies such as the failure to observe the Sabbath and the allowing of animals to wander in the wrong gardens.¹⁸⁷

Robinson's reports on the state of the settlement in 1832 and 1835, were an effective counter to the glowing reports of progress continually forwarded to Arthur from the settlement's officials.¹⁸⁸ During his visit in March, 1832, Robinson reported that two Aborigines had recently died. In Robinson's opinion these deaths were due to the exposed state of the settlement and inadequate accommodations. The physical problems of the settlement were compounded by the water supply which was impure and insufficient.¹⁸⁹ Relations between the Aborigines and whites were bad. Aboriginal women were intimidated, sentinels were placed over Aborigines, some were transported to isolated situations as a punishment and a recent shooting incident had led to the wounding of two Aborigines.¹⁹⁰ When Robinson arrived at Flinders Island three and a half years later, the physical conditions were much the same, although the site of the settlement had been moved to Wybalenna. The Aboriginal population continued to decline.¹⁹¹

Disputes between the principal officers on the settlement, the commandant, the medical officer, catechist and storekeeper, also yielded information on the real conditions at Flinders. Thus, in a dispute with the Commandant, Nickolls, the medical officer, Dr. James Allen, revealed that the Aborigines had not eaten fresh meat more than once or twice in the last six months before April, 1835.¹⁹² In July, 1835, an official inquiry into the Aborigines' rations noted that the salted meat given as rations to the Aborigines was so disliked that it was fed to their dogs.¹⁹³

Arthur's interest in Flinders Island exemplified the unreal level of government policy towards the settlement. Apart from ineffectual efforts to ensure an adequate food supply,¹⁹⁴ Arthur's concern

revolved around the most fitting life style for the Aborigines and the proper requirements for their religious training. In December, 1834, he instructed Nickolls to discourage the practice of hunting, concluding that "the most likely method of bringing the Natives to habits of civilization and industry will be by gradually withdrawing them from their former customs".¹⁹⁵ A dispute between Nickolls and the catechist, Robert Clarke, over religious instruction for the Aborigines, was of the utmost importance to Arthur. Nickolls advocated "caution" in religious instruction, particularly in explaining future condemnation. He claimed that the present instruction had led to "a perfect horror of everything connected with religious instruction confounding all such matters as connected with the Devil". He proposed a more humane approach, stressing the "everlasting happiness that follows the course of a virtuous life" and the use and value of labour in rendering them a "religious people".¹⁹⁶ Arthur found these notions in direct variance with "missionary experience". He disagreed with Nickolls' suggestion that civilization could precede scriptural instruction. Instead, he proposed the reverse: "The inculcation of the first principles of the religion - not of nature as it is called - but of the Bible is the most effective mode of inducing civilization."¹⁹⁷

Robinson submitted his first report on the Flinders Island settlement to Arthur two weeks after his arrival in October, 1835. He wrote that conditions were such that he did "not wonder at the Natives dying but, on the contrary, am surprised that any of them should be alive".¹⁹⁸ His arrival marked the beginning of a local attempt to improve conditions at Wybalenna. Yet, in March of the

following year, Robinson reported that improvements in accommodation were limited to temporary changes in Aboriginal huts and the introduction of fixed bedsteads.¹⁹⁹ The water supply was still inadequate and there was no regular fresh meat. His efforts were seriously hampered by the lack of concern and niggardly outlook of the colonial government, together with the unsuitability of the site. Surrounded by the effects of this lack of care, Robinson felt very bitter about the government's neglect.²⁰⁰ The Aborigines were clearly unhappy about captivity and hunger, continual cold and impure water exasperated the situation. Improvements in food and accommodation did occur slowly after March 1836.²⁰¹ These probably contributed to a lowering in the death rate. Only four deaths occurred in the year after Robinson's arrival.²⁰²

Robinson's main efforts during 1836 on Flinders were to continue the religious conversion and civilization process begun on Bruny Island six years earlier. His stress on the paramount importance of religious instruction concurred with Arthur's views. The methods he adopted were reminiscent of Bruny Island - a reliance on the repetition of basic religious truths to instil Christianity, the discouragement of Aboriginal customs that seemed barbaric or primitive to the European eye, and the promotion of outward forms of "civilized" existence such as separate huts for individual families.²⁰³ Robinson again attempted to create an artificial situation whereby he directed all civilizing efforts. Contact between Aborigines and white convicts or military officers was thus strictly regulated, even if of a friendly nature.²⁰⁴

During the second half of 1836, Robinson widened his civilizing programme. Within the space of a few months, he established an

Aboriginal fund arising out of the Aborigines' private property, a small Aboriginal police force, a weekly newspaper with contributions from Aborigines, a circulating medium and a weekly market.²⁰⁵ Robinson had high hopes for this market. He believed the scheme was "the most effective that has ever been put into practice to Instruct these people in the value of property".²⁰⁶

Major Ryan's report on Flinders Island in April, 1836, revealed the limited scope of Robinson's improvements. Ryan had resided at the settlement for a number of weeks during Robinson's absence. His report was a detailed critique of the past administration of Flinders and present governmental neglect. Robinson escaped direct criticism and his religious efforts were praised. Ryan was struck by the appalling physical conditions at Wybalenna, particularly the poor water, accommodation and food supply. The provision of salt meat was singled out as a prime evil. Ryan could not conceive of "a greater injustice from a Government professedly humane".²⁰⁷ In his opinion, the withholding of adequate food and water supplies amounted to "criminal" neglect. The final conclusion from a high ranking officer was difficult to ignore:

The probable future fate of the Aborigines of this colony, is I conceive a subject of deep and painful interest, there are but one hundred and nineteen human beings left, and with little prospect... of an increase in population. - It is in vain to attempt to deny that great mismanagement has occurred.²⁰⁸

Arthur was shaken by the prospect of the total extinction of the Aborigines, particularly if the government could be directly implicated.²⁰⁹ Accordingly he organized permanent improvements in accommodation. Efforts were also made to ensure a regular supply

of fresh meat for the settlement.²¹⁰ In July there were still arguments about the price of the flock,²¹¹ and it was only with Ryan's constant interference that the flock was sent.²¹² Arthur made some enquiries into past mismanagement under Darling and Nickolls, but these were shortlived. It was argued that Ryan's critical conclusions were largely the result of "being misinformed".²¹³ Official neglect continued as the keystone to government policy.

Although Robinson enthusiastically initiated many programmes on Flinders throughout 1836, his confidence in the settlement was dampened by the prospect of a gradually dwindling Aboriginal population. The only chance he saw of avoiding this was the removal of the Tasmanian Aborigines to the south coast of New Holland where they could amalgamate with the local Aboriginal tribes. This scheme seemed possible when Arthur asked Robinson in February, 1835, if he favoured taking the Tasmanian Aborigines with him on a possible conciliatory mission to the Aborigines at Norfolk or Portland Bay.²¹⁴ Arthur's support for a second removal of the Tasmanian Aborigines arose from his sympathy with Robinson's views on the need to avoid the slow extinction of the Aborigines on Flinders and his realization that such an outcome would reflect unfavourably on his solution to the conflict in VDL. Robinson was enthusiastic about such a mission. He believed conciliation on the south coast could prevent future conflict as settlers opened up the area and the removal of the Tasmanian Aborigines would give them new hope. This mission and a further one proposed to South Australia did not eventuate due to financial wrangles between Robinson and the Colonial Government.²¹⁵

Robinson again canvassed the idea of the removal of Aborigines to New Holland two weeks after his arrival at Wybalenna.²¹⁶ His proposal was prompted by the depressing mood and physical conditions of the settlement, the prospect of total Aboriginal extinction and his desire to escape from witnessing such an event. He maintained that the feelings of "excitement" inevitable on Flinders would be lessened if extinction occurred through the amalgamation with the Aborigines of New Holland.²¹⁷ Arthur gave qualified support to Robinson's view in two despatches.²¹⁸

To Glenelg, the most pressing consideration was the possibility of conflict between the Tasmanian Aborigines, those of New Holland and the future white colonists. These factors made removal "extremely hazardous". His rejection of the scheme in his despatch of November, 1835, was final.²¹⁹

With Arthur's approaching departure in October, 1836, Robinson saw his last chance of saving the remnant of the Tasmanian tribes from a lingering decline. Only with Arthur's support could the British government be moved from its intransigent position. Although the death rate had been considerably lower during Robinson's first year on Flinders, births were almost non-existent. Robinson realized that extinction was the inevitable result of the continuation of the Flinders Island experiment and this prospect weighed heavily on his mind. He pressed Arthur on the eve of his departure to canvass for removal to soften the inevitable end.²²⁰ In his last letters to Arthur, Robinson revealed an unusual commitment and concern for the future of the people. His prognosis for the future of the Aborigines on Flinders was

thoughtful and largely correct:

... they will linger and... a gradual diminution of their numbers, will operate sensibly on their minds, producing a degree of mental excitement, and melancholy reflection, distressing to their feelings, and I must confess that I should not wish to be a spectator of such an unhappy result.²²¹

Robinson's plans were ignored and thus genocide was sanctioned. Once again the colonial government showed that its ^{overriding} sole interest was to maintain peaceful British settlement even if this involved the extinction of a race.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 4

1. Batman to Burnett, February 27, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/320/7578).
2. Plomley, op.cit., pp.472-473, n.277.
3. ibid., p.105, n.50.
4. Aboriginal Committee minutes, February 23, 1830.
5. Aboriginal Committee to Batman, September 3, 1831 (C.S.O. 1/319/7578).
6. See below p.154 for reasons for this.
7. Entries for March 26,27, April 2,3,7,8, 1830 in the MS Diary of John Batman for 1830. Typed copy in State Library Victoria. Original MS in National Library, Canberra.
8. Batman to Anstey, April 12, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/320/7578).
9. Batman to Anstey, April 15, 1830, ibid.
10. Batman's diary entry, May 8, 1830, loc.cit.
11. Batman to Anstey, April 15, 1830, loc.cit.
12. ibid. See Anstey's note.
13. Batman to Anstey, May 24, 1830, op.cit. Courier, May 29 1830.
14. Batman to Anstey, May 24, 1830, loc.cit. See Arthur's note; Batman to Chief Police Magistrate, May 28, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/317/7578).
15. Batman's diary entries for May 24,30,31, June 19, 1830, loc.cit.
16. Batman's diary entries for June, July, August, 1830, loc.cit.
17. Batman to Burnett, August 24, 1830 (Batman Papers, State Library, Victoria).
18. Batman's diary entry for August 24, 1830, loc.cit.
19. Batman to Burnett, August 24, 1830, loc.cit.
20. Colonial Times, October 1, 1830.
21. ibid.
22. Arthur to Murray, April 15, 1830.
23. Vicary to Col.Sec., June 1, 1830. See Arthur's note C.S.O. 1/316/7578).

24. Col.Sec. to Vicary, June 10, 1830. See note regarding letter to Clark (C.S.O. 1/317/7578).
25. Welsh to Col.Sec., August 13, 1830. See Arthur's note (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
26. Arthur to Murray, April 15, 1830.
27. Vicary to Col.Sec. See Arthur's note, July 6, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
28. *ibid.*
29. Vicary to Col.Sec., July 26, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
30. Vicary to Col.Sec., August 16, 1830, *op.cit.*
31. Tasmanian, June 18, 1830; Colonial Times, August 20, 1830.
32. C.S.O. 1/323/7578.
33. Rowcroft to Aboriginal Committee. Also Patterson, Jorgenson, Sharland to Aboriginal Committee, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/323/7578); Tasmanian, June 30, 1830.
34. Military Operations, p.61.
35. *ibid.*, pp.61-62.
36. Executive Council minutes, August 27, 1830.
37. Jury to Arthur, August 24, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
38. Anstey to Col.Sec., August 24, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
39. *ibid.*
40. Murray to Arthur, April 24, 1830.
41. West, *op.cit.*, pp.79-145.
42. Aboriginal Committee to Burnett, August 27, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/319/7578).
43. Executive Council minutes, August 27, 1830.
44. *ibid.*
45. *ibid.*
46. *ibid.*
47. Burnett to Arthur, November 16, 1830 (Arthur Papers, Vol.15); Pedder to Arthur, November 17, 1830 (Arthur Papers, Vol.9).
48. Compare the extract of despatch in Military Operations, pp.57-61, with original. Also compare copy of extract of Executive Council minutes, August 27, 1830 in Military Operations, pp.62-64 with original.

49. Military Operations, p.62.
50. ibid., pp.64-66.
51. ibid., pp.66-67.
52. ibid., p.70.
53. Arthur to Twiss, March 9, 1830.
54. See Arthur's note on Arthur to Murray, November 20, 1830:
"The respectable settlers have indeed from motives of self-preservation and policy long striven to cultivate a friendly feeling with the Natives..."
55. See Chapter 3, p.60
56. Tasmanian, September 10, 1830; Courier, September 11, 1830; Colonial Times, September 17, October 1, 1830.
57. Melville, op.cit., p.91.
58. Colonial Times, September 24, 1830.
59. Colonial Advocate, May 1, 1828.
60. Colonial Times, September 24, 1830.
61. Courier, September 11, 1830.
62. Launceston Advertiser, September 27, 1830.
63. Burnett to Arthur, November 4, 1830 (Arthur Papers, Vol.15)
My emphasis.
64. Tasmanian, September 24, 1830. The following report of the meeting comes from this source.
65. Courier, October 2, 1830.
66. Tasmanian, October 8, 1830; Colonial Times, October 8, 1830.
67. Robinson's diary entries for November 22,28, 1830, Plomley, op.cit., pp.281,532.
68. Salmon to Anstey, September 28, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/324/7578); see also Rev. Braim, 'Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land', MS (Mitchell Library, Sydney). The MS is undated, but it was probably written between 1836 and 1840.
69. Anstey's note on Salmon to Arthur, September 28, 1830, loc.cit.
70. Burnett to Arthur, October 8, 1830 (Arthur Papers, Vol.15).
71. ibid., October 15, 1830.

72. *ibid.*; Walpole to Arthur, October 29, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/324/7578).
73. For details of the military complexities of Arthur's direction of the operations, see C.S.O. 1/324/7578 .
74. Burnett to Arthur, October 8, 1830 (Arthur Papers, Vol.15).
75. Burnett to Arthur, October 23, 1830, *ibid.*
76. Courier, September 25, October 23,30, 1830.
77. Burnett to Arthur, October 18, 1830 (Arthur Papers, Vol.15).
78. *ibid.*, October 23, 1830.
79. Burnett to Arthur, November 4, 1830 (Arthur Papers, Vol.15).
80. *ibid.*
82. Arthur to Cox, October 13, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/324/7578).
83. Courier, October 23, 1830.
84. Gray to Burnett, October 17, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/330/7578).
85. Gray to Burnett, October 23, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
86. Courier, November 16, 1830.
87. Gray to Arthur, October 24, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
88. *ibid.*, November 1, 1830.
89. Burnett to Arthur, November 6, 1830 (Arthur Papers, Vol.15).
90. Military Operations, p.41.
91. Gray to Arthur, November 11, 1830, *op.cit.*
92. Tasmanian, November 19, 1830.
93. Burnett to Arthur, December 11, 1830 (Arthur Papers, Vol.15).
94. Arthur to Murray, November 20, 1830.
95. Executive Council minutes, November 30, 1830.
96. Melville, *op.cit.*, p.103.
97. Colonial Times, November 26, 1830.
98. *ibid.*
99. Tasmanian, December 3, 1830.
100. Courier, November 20, 1830.

101. 'Autobiography of J.H. Wedge' (MS draft in Mitchell Library, Sydney).
102. Arthur Papers, Vol.28.
103. Colonial Times, December 31, 1830.
104. Melville, op.cit., p.105.
105. Colonial Times, December 31, 1830.
106. Tasmanian, March 4, 1830.
107. Courier, December 11, 1830; Arthur memorandum, December 15, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/317/7578); Arthur to Murray, January 1, 1831.
108. This decline in hostilities counters the common historical view that the Black Line was militarily ineffective.
109. Burnett to Smith, January 12, 1831 (C.S.O. 1/317/7578).
110. See Plomley, op.cit., pp.478-479 for complete list.
111. Robinson to Burnett, November 20, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/330/7578); Plomley, op.cit., p.440, n64, p.479.
112. Plomley, op.cit., p.438, n44.
113. Entry for November 1, 1830, *ibid.*, p.261.
114. Burnett to Robinson, November 23, 1830 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.32).
115. Burnett to Aboriginal Committee, February 1, 1831 (C.S.O. 1/317/7578).
116. Report of the Aboriginal Committee, February 4, 1831, Military Operations, p.76.
117. Robinson first made this claim in his letter to Burnett on November 20, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/317/7578).
118. Report of Aboriginal Committee, February 4, 1831, *loc.cit.*
119. In fact, roving parties were not abolished till considerably later.
120. Executive Council minutes, February 23, 1831.
121. Tasmanian, May 28, 1831.
122. *ibid.*
123. *ibid.*, May 28, June 4, 1831; Colonial Times, May 25, June 8, 1831.

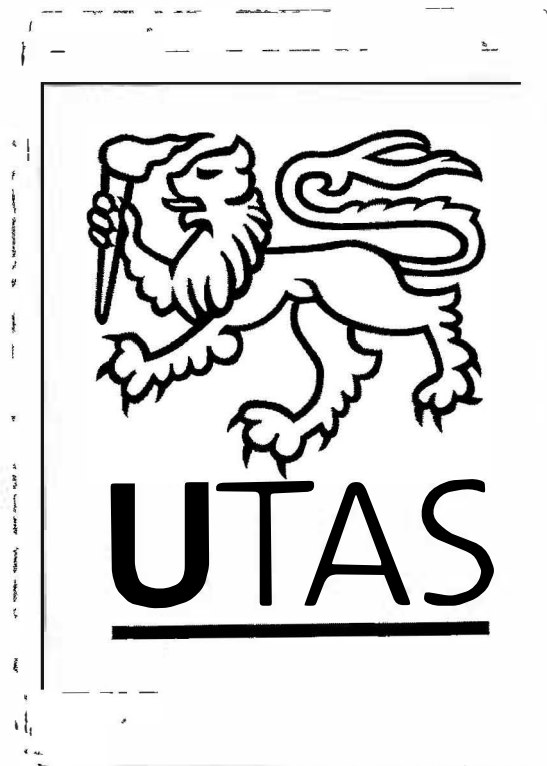
124. These included Parish's December captures.
125. Colonial Times, April 23,30, 1830.
126. Braim, loc.cit.
127. Colonial Times, April 23, 1830.
128. ibid., April 30, 1830.
129. ibid.
130. Courier, August 28, 1830.
131. Tasmanian, December 10, 1830.
132. ibid., June 25, 1831.
133. ibid., October 1, 1831.
134. ibid.
135. ibid., April 7, 1837.
136. Arthur to Goderich, January 10, 1828.
137. Arthur to Goderich, April 17, 1828.
138. Burnett to Robinson, March 16, 1830 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.32).
139. Melville, op.cit., p.104.
140. Report of the Aboriginal Committee, February 4, 1831, loc.cit.; Executive Council minutes, February 23, 1831.
141. Executive Council Minutes, February 23, 1831.
142. For example, Robinson stated that the "aborigines of VDL are patriots, staunch lovers of the country", in 1830. Entry for December 28, 1830, Plomley, op.cit., p.302.
143. Executive Council minutes, February 23, 1831.
144. ibid.
145. Executive Council minutes, March 14, 1831.
146. Arthur to Murray, April 4, 1831.
147. Goderich to Arthur, May 5, November 19, 1831.
148. 'List of atrocities committed by the Natives since March 19, 1830' in Report of the Aboriginal Committee, February 4, 1831, loc.cit.; Plomley, op.cit., p.455, n.155.

149. Colonial Times, September 21, 1831; Jocelyn Thomas to Robinson, September 21, 1831 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.34).
150. Colonial Times, September 14, 1831.
151. *ibid.*, September 21, 1831.
152. Report of the Aboriginal Committee, February 4, 1831, *loc.cit.*
153. Colonial Times, September 14, 1831.
154. Colonial Times, September 28, 1831.
155. Robinson to Burnett, August 30, 1831 (C.S.O. 1/318/7578).
156. Robinson to Burnett, May 9, 1831. See Burnett's comments (C.S.O. 1/317/7578), Robinson to Burnett, August 6, 1831. See Arthur's comments (C.S.O. 1/318/7578).
157. Burnett to Robinson, April 29, 1831; Charles Arthur to Robinson, May 12, 1831; Burnett to Robinson, May 3, 1830 (Robinson Papers, Vol.32).
158. Plomley, *op.cit.*, pp.481-482, pp.574-576, n.1.
159. Report of the Aboriginal Committee, February 4, 1831, *loc.cit.*
160. *ibid.*
161. Entry for October 15, 1831, Plomley, *op.cit.*, p.484.
162. *ibid.*, p.572.
163. *ibid.*
164. *ibid.*, p.588.
165. Entry for May 13, 1832, *ibid.*, pp.606-607. See Ch.5 for more on relations between Robinson and the VDL Company.
166. Entry for September 4, 1832, *ibid.*, pp.650-654.
167. Entries for September 10,, October 20, 1832, *ibid.*, p.672.
168. *ibid.*
169. Entries for June 23, July 15,16, September 4, 1832, *ibid.*, pp.621-623, 631-632, 651-654.
170. *ibid.*, p.704.
171. For complete list, see *ibid.*, pp.819-821.
172. Entry for May 20, 1833, *ibid.*, pp.723-725.
173. Entries for July 13,22, 1833, *ibid.*, pp.754,764.

174. Entries for July 24 to August 6, 1833, *ibid.*, pp.769-777., esp.773.
175. *ibid.*, p.917, n92.
176. Entries for February 28, March 14, April 7, 1834. For complete list of Aborigines, see *ibid.*, pp.854,862-863, 873,921.
177. *ibid.*, p.926.
178. *ibid.* This claim was not true. Small groups remained in the colony, particularly in the north west. Also some Aborigines remained in sealing communities in the Bass Straits. See L. Ryan, 'Outcasts in White Tasmania', in Mankind, December, 1972, Vol.8.
179. *ibid.*, pp.927-928.
180. *ibid.*, p.481.
181. Welsh to Abbot, February 10, 1831. See Arthur's minute (C.S.O. 1/492-4/10853).
182. Maclachlan to ?, May 20, 1830 (Tasmanian Aborigines, Mitchell Library); Abbot to Colonial Secretary, May 4, 1831 (C.S.O. 1/330/7578).
183. Rowley, *op.cit.*, p.49; Plomley, *op.cit.*, p.934.
184. March 1832-July 1834.
185. September 1834-October 1835.
186. 'Report of Major Thomas Ryan 50 Regt. Commandant of Launceston upon the State of VDL Aborigines settled on Flinders Island, Bass Straits', April, 1836 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.42).
187. Allen to Col. Surgeon, April 23, 1835; Nickolls to Col. Sec., July 11, 1835; Nickolls to Catechist, September 27, 1835; Clark to Nickolls, September 29, 1835; Nickolls to Col.Sec., November 4, 1835 (C.S.O. 1/325/7578).
188. Nickolls to Col.Sec., April 18, July 9, 1835; Wilkinson to Arthur, September 17, 1833 (C.S.O. 1/325/7578); Darling to Arthur, May 14, 1832, September 24, 1833 (Arthur's Papers, Vol.28).
189. Robinson to Col.Sec., March 1,2,26, 1832 (C.S.O. 1/325/7578).
190. *ibid.*
191. See official list of deaths in Papers of G.A.R., Vol.32 (copy). According to this list, 24 Aborigines died on Flinders during 1833 and 28 in 1834.

192. Allen to Col.Sec., April 23, 1825 (C.S.O. 1/325/7578).
193. 'Report of the Treasurer and Auditor upon the allowance of the natives at Flinders Island, December 7, 1835' (C.S.O. 1/325/7578).
194. Arthur's memorandum, January 8, 1834; Arthur's minutes on Moodie to Burnett, July 25, 1834 and Nickolls to Burnett, November 3, 1835 (C.S.O. 1/325/7578).
195. Montagu to Commandant, Flinders Island, December 20, 1834 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.41).
196. Nickolls to Catechist, February 12, March 4, April 18, 1835 (C.S.O. 1/868/18365).
197. Arthur to Nickolls (draft copy), May 30, 1835 (C.S.O. 1/803/17181).
198. Robinson Report, November 2, 1835 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol. 22).
199. Robinson Report, March 7, 1836, loc.cit.
200. Entry for December 21, 1835 (Papers of G.A.R., Journals, Flinders Island, 1835, Vol.11).
201. Plomley, op.cit., p.933.
202. Robinson Report, September 8, 1836 (Arthur Papers, Vol.28).
203. Flinders Island diary entries for 1835 and 1836, loc.cit.
204. Settlement Order, November 11, 1835 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.41); Diary entry for December 16, 1835, loc.cit.
205. Entries for August 9.16.27, 1836, loc.cit; Robinson Report, September 8, 1836, loc.cit.
206. Entry for August 9, 1836, loc.cit.
207. Ryan Report, loc.cit.
208. ibid.
209. Entry for May 12, 1836.
210. Arthur to Colonial Secretary, received June 24, 1836; Arthur to Colonial Secretary, received July 1, 1836 (C.S.O. 1/771/16473; 1/868/18365).
211. Montagu to Arthur, July 5, 1836 (C.S.O. 1/771/16473).
212. Ryan to Arthur, June 9,16, July 16, 1836 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.42).
213. Arthur to Colonial Secretary, received July 1, 1836, loc.cit.

214. Montagu to Robinson, February 7, 1835 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.32).
215. Plomley, op.cit., p.930.
216. Robinson Report, November 2, 1835, loc.cit.
217. ibid.
218. Arthur to Glenelg, January 27, 1835; Arthur to Spring Rice, March 10, 1835.
219. Glenelg to Arthur, September 3, November 20, 1835.
220. Robinson to Montagu, October 27,28,29, 1836 (Arthur Papers, Vol.28).
221. Robinson to Montagu, October 28, 1836, loc.cit.



CHAPTER 5

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE VAN DIEMEN'S LAND COMPANY AND THE ABORIGINES, 1826-1842

The history of relations between the Aborigines and the Van Diemen's Land Company provide an opportunity of examining at a microscopic level, a contact situation that was repeated on a larger scale in the rest of VDL and in the mainland colonies. The experiences of the Company reveal the contradiction between the early idealistic schemes for the Aborigines formed by the settlement planners and the reality which confronted those actually involved in the struggle for possession of the land from the Aborigines. The notion that for the Aborigines settlement could be at the least protective and at the most offer positive benefits, was shown to be a myth. One incident which highlighted the contradiction was an investigation into the killing of an Aboriginal woman in 1829. The issues which this investigation brought forth were not publicly discussed as all mention of the event and the subsequent inquiry were suppressed and thus the event had little or no effect on the colonists' attitudes to the Aborigines. However, the event is worthy of inquiry for other reasons. As well as giving us an insight into the Company's attitudes and methods of coping with Aboriginal hostility, it revealed the hypocrisy of the government's public espousal of conciliatory measures and equal protection for the Aborigines and it brought the interesting revelation that actions which were contrary to the protective and conciliatory precepts on which government policy was supposedly based, were legally sanctioned by the end of 1828.

The Van Diemen's Land Company¹ was a venture promoted by a group of English businessmen who had expectations of using the vast empty tracts of the colony to produce fine wool to supplement Britain's inadequate domestic supply. Attention had been focussed on VDL's wool producing potentialities in 1822, when James Dixon published his narrative on the young colony.² In this book, Dixon had pointed to the advantages of VDL for fine wool production and had even advocated the formation of a joint stock company. In 1825, the promoters of the Company were successful in gaining a grant of 250,000 acres in the north west of the Colony with the proviso that the land taken up be remote from the settled districts. This proviso proved to be a great stumbling block to the efforts of the Company to locate its land as Arthur was able to use it to limit the eastward extension of the Company's location.³ This dispute with Arthur was the first of a number, and was an early sign of the unfavourable light in which the local government and the settlers viewed the Company. K.M. Dallas⁴ has pointed out that the struggle between the Company's agent, Curr, and Arthur (and later Governor Franklin) was not simply between individuals, but between "systems of colonisation", and that the failure of the Company must be seen in these terms:

It (the Company) was an anachronism. It was a repetition in Australian conditions, of a method of colonial exploitation which had flourished in America in the previous two hundred years and had been destroyed by the Americans in their struggle for independence. Governor Arthur was, very discreetly, the leader of a group of Tasmanian colonists who saw themselves as the landed aristocracy. The Company's Charter was drafted at a time when the Great East India Company was dying, when its last remaining trade monopoly was being lost piecemeal to the man on the spot, the

'country traders'; hence its charter forbade it to engage in trade, and banking and in whaling, that 'most profitable of colonial ventures' as Curr described it.⁵

It was partly this system of remote control inherent in the conception of the Company, that caused the setbacks in the first fifteen years of the Company's operations. A scheme of farming had been devised in England, with little knowledge of local conditions and the directors of the Company, even in the face of heavy losses, remained impervious to suggestions of change in the basis of farming. This ignorance of local conditions had particularly unfortunate results for the Company. They had decided to concentrate on the production of fine wool, but the Company's grant proved unsuited to sheep farming. It was only after some disastrous sheep losses and Curr's visit to England in 1833, that a re-evaluation of the Company's programme took place. Even then success proved illusive and it took until the early 1840s for the Company to find its feet.

The key figure of the Company in VDL was Edward Curr. Curr first visited the Colony in 1820, when he stayed in Hobart for three years. During this period he conducted business, firstly in partnership with John Rains, and when he found him too sharp in business, he formed a second partnership with Horatio William Mason. During this first stay in the colony, Curr served in the Deputy-Judge Advocate's Court and was active in raising money for a Catholic Church and priests' residence in Harrington Street, Hobart.⁶ While on the voyage back to England in 1823, he wrote a book from information gathered during his stay.⁷ He presented a dim view of the young colony and warned future settlers of the

dangers of idealizing colonial life. As well as the "moral evil" occasioned by large numbers of convicts, the settler had to contend with "solitude and banishment".⁸ Curr, perhaps because he never settled on the land, experienced a strong feeling of disorientation while living in the sparsely settled colony. He seemed unable to appreciate any of the positive features of the settlers' rough existence. Throughout his book, one finds constant expressions of his dislike for the non-British style of landscape and farming. Since gum trees only gave the beholder an impression of "desolation and decay", Curr advised all future colonists to bring "ornamental timber" with them from England.⁹ He felt that farms suffered from the absence of typical British features such as beautiful hedges and crop variety. The existence of tree stumps in almost every cleared area of land gave him "a painful sensation of incommodousness and half civilization".¹⁰ Surprisingly, Curr did not include the usual section on Aborigines in his book. Thus, unfortunately, we do not know if he had any contact with Aborigines during his residence in the colony.

When Curr arrived in Hobart for the second time in May, 1826, as chief agent for the Company, he was only 28 years old and untried as a farmer. During the next sixteen years, his determined and skilful management of the Company's interests against incredible odds, justified the Company's initial faith in him. In other respects, he proved unsatisfactory to the directors. During the whole period of his position as chief agent, he was involved in disputes with the local government, sometimes against the express advice of the Company directors.¹¹ Due to this inability to accommodate himself with the local government he was dismissed in 1841.

In England, the directors of the Company displayed a vague humanitarian concern for the Aborigines. James Bischoff, the managing director of the Company, expressed the central notion behind the Company's policy in his history of the Colony published in 1832:

The original possessors of the land must have regarded the European settlers as invaders or uninvited, obtrusive guests; and the occupation of land and encroachment upon their hunting grounds, could be alone justified, by the hope that these degraded and wretched savages might be taught the arts of civilised life, and from a state of misery advanced to comfort and happiness.¹²

Such sentiments were repeated in most of the Despatches concerned with the Aborigines that were sent to the Company agents in the Colony.¹³ One unusual aspect of their thinking was the expressed desire to bring the Aborigines into a state of "usefulness".¹⁴ It must have seemed logical to the directors to satisfy their labour demands with the indigenous population as this was the traditional practice in other non-penal British colonies where slavery was not present. There was an absence however, of any concrete plans for instituting these ideas. One feels that the Company's public emphasis on improving the lot of the Aborigines was made with a view to impressing the British Colonial Office and the local government. During the 1820s and 1830s, when the Company was gaining its Charter and negotiating the limits of its location, it could ill afford to lose an opportunity of gaining support from government circles.

Edward Curr expressed his particular interpretation of the Company's policy towards the Aborigines soon after the Company began operations in the Colony. Not unexpectedly, his early statements strongly echoed the Company's declared concern for the welfare of

the Aborigines. Thus all Company employees were informed by Curr that since the Aborigines had been deprived of their hunting grounds, they had acquired "a claim to such assistance and consideration as circumstances may enable the Company's servants to offer". Curr's lack of trust in the Aborigines and his pessimistic view of the possibilities for amicable relations, was evident in his warning to Company servants to keep in mind the "well known character of the people" and to guard against "treachery". No servant, he wrote, should be "seduced by any appearance of friendliness". He suggested ominously, that the best way to prevent conflict was to be always prepared to repel and punish aggression".¹⁵

The first hostile encounters with the Aborigines occurred at Woolnorth, two years after the Company had begun operations. Due to the difficulties in finding suitable land, the Company's sheep farming was limited, and the effect of this on the Aboriginal hunting and food gathering economy could not have been great. However, the introduction of land clearing, fencing and building would have been clear indications to the Aborigines that the intruders intended to stay.

Conflicting reports were given by different parties of initial hostilities. Curr told the Company directors in February, 1828, that the Aborigines initiated hostilities in the Woolnorth area by killing one hundred and eighteen sheep and that in retaliation for this, six Aborigines were shot. Under what circumstances these killings took place, Curr felt no need to explain. His account simply stated that "the shepherds fell in with a strong party of natives who after a long fight left six of their number on the field".¹⁶

When George Augustus Robinson interviewed Charles Chamberlain and William Gunshannon, two of the shepherds involved in the killings, a story emerged which was no doubt more accurate. Chamberlain admitted to Robinson that about thirty and not six Aborigines were killed in the incident. They had been shot and thrown over a cliff where the Aborigines had previously thrown the sheep.¹⁷

Further light is thrown on the massacre by information that Robinson later gathered from some Aboriginal informants. They told him that the sheep had been slaughtered in response to some shepherd's attempt to "take liberties" with some Aboriginal women. As a result, the men of the tribe had speared a man in the thigh and the whites in retaliation, shot an Aborigine dead. It was only after this murder that the Aborigines had killed the sheep.¹⁸

In revealing the Company attitudes and treatment of the Aborigines, this series of encounters was significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it exposed Curr's attitudes towards the Aborigines for the first time. Up until then, his statements had a mild conciliatory tone, although certain undercurrents of harsh and aggressive attitudes were present. When writing to the directors about this massacre, Curr showed no hesitation in expressing totally contrary views to the Company's stance of conciliation. He implied that the shepherds' actions would be beneficial for the Company since they would intimidate the Aborigines.¹⁹ Curr's views were representative of the most extreme settler opinion. He held out no hope for amicable relations with the Aborigines, believing that "their visits are only paid for the purpose of ascertaining our means of defence and weak points". Curr's concluding remarks on the Aborigines in this Despatch reveal his view of the total

situation:

They have been the aggressors, and strife once begun with any of these tribes has never yet been terminated, nor will according to present appearances, but by their extermination. The Colonial Papers for the last two years contain almost every week instances of murders committed by them on the white inhabitants; hitherto we have been fortunate enough to lose no lives by them, but we can only hope to prevent our people from being murdered by obtaining and preserving the mastery over them.²⁰

These remarks followed the first hostile encounters. The Aborigines had not yet posed a serious threat to the Company's operations or employees.

The second significant aspect of this massacre is the Company directors' response. Curr's lack of information on the circumstances of the deaths was accepted. According to the directors, the shepherds had acted under provocation and therefore could not be censured for their actions. Their Despatch continued with a plea for further efforts at civilization and "friendly consideration of all". Setting aside the "justified" massacre by Company servants and ignoring its possible effect on relations with the Aborigines, they wrote of the unfortunate contact between the Aborigines and escaped convicts and bushrangers. The Aborigines were thus not aware of "good Englishmen".²¹ Curr's extremist views, his open advocacy of extermination, were passed over in silence.

The possible use of such sophistry was apparent in a letter sent by the Company to the Secretary of State, Sir George Murray, three weeks later. The Governor of the Company, John Pearce, requested that military protection be extended to the Company because of the

recent Aboriginal attacks. Enclosing two recent letters to Curr as proof of the Company's conciliatory endeavours, Pearce wrote that as "much time will be necessary to accomplish these desirable ends", in the meantime "immediate protection is needed".²² Thus the Company could use its stance as protector and conciliator of the Aborigines to gain military protection from the government, thereby ensuring that their agricultural operations would receive as little interference as possible.

The third significant aspect of these massacres is the light they throw on the attitudes of the Company's servants towards the Aborigines. Of the four, only Chamberlain was still under sentence. Gunshannon was an ex-convict, while Nicholson and Weaver were Company servants. It is not known whether any contact had taken place between any of these four men and the Aborigines prior to their employment by the Company. It is therefore, difficult to determine if their participation in the massacre was touched off simply by the recent hostile encounters. However, until this stage, Aboriginal hostility on Company property had been confined to a few incidents - the wounding of a shepherd, an attack on a hut and the destruction of sheep. These hostilities could not have made them over-concerned for their safety. On the other hand, they may have learned to fear the Aborigines from contact with them in other areas of VDL, and if not, second hand accounts would have certainly made them aware of the extent of Aboriginal hostility in the rest of the island. Given the isolated position of the shepherds, fear of the Aborigines was thus probably an important motivating factor in their action.

However, fear was probably not the only motivating factor in the massacre. One could put it down to the influence of a brutal penal society,²³ and this certainly must be taken into account. But this surely does not explain the degree of barbarity. One cannot imagine the same shepherds killing thirty whites under the same circumstances, especially with such little provocation and such indifference.²⁴ The Company servants and convicts seemed to view the Aborigines as subhuman, a type of animal that would have to be controlled in much the same way as they were trying to control their environment. A further illustration of this approach to the Aborigines is given by an interview with a Company shepherd recorded by Lord Stokes, a traveller in VDL.²⁵ This shepherd had spent the early part of his servitude at the Company's settlement at Circular Head. As a convict, he had been "in charge" of an Aboriginal woman who had been caught stealing flour and tobacco from a shepherd's hut. Stokes inquired how the man gained the woman's obedience:

... the inhuman wretch confessed without a blush
 ... that he kept the poor woman chained up like
 a wild beast; and whenever he wanted her to do
 anything, applied a burning stick, or firebrand
 snatched from the hearth to her skin!²⁶

Stokes remarked that this tale was told without embarrassment; the shepherd seemed insensible that such treatment might produce revulsion and criticism in others.

The Goldie Affair

Throughout the latter 1820s, hostile encounters were common. The area of conflict shifted from the Woolnorth area, where the

Company flock had been removed in April, 1828, to the Hampshire and Surrey Hills districts. In October, 1828, a Company servant was speared at Burleigh,²⁷ This was followed by a period of quite intensive hostility on the part of the Aborigines in late 1829.²⁸ For the other side of the story - attacks on Aborigines by Company servants - we have to rely on sources outside the Company. Robinson's interviews with Aborigines reveal that in vying for possession of the land, the Company's servants displayed a similar level of violence. He records that he was informed by members of his Aboriginal party that a black woman was kept for a month by a stock-keeper and then shot.²⁹ Thomas, a Company employee, enticed some Aborigines with a large damper on the end of a knife and "whilst the man was in the act of taking it off, he rushed forward and ripped him up".³⁰ Other evidence of murders by Company employees is given by the Hare family, who visited Circular Head during this period. After hearing of a considerable number of natives being murdered by Company servants, they came to the conclusion that the employees wished to "extirpate them entirely, if possible".³¹

Reports of this type of assault on the Aborigines by the Company employees in the remote stock-runs of the north west were not likely to reach government quarters. Past experience, especially in the 1827 Burleigh Massacre, had shown Company employees that actions taken against the Aborigines were not likely to be investigated; that government proclamations exhorting whites to act humanely could safely be ignored. Given this situation, one can comprehend the indignation of Company servant, Alexander Goldie,³² when accused by Curr of being, in a moral sense, an accessory to murder for his participation in a capture party whose activities

had resulted in the death of an Aboriginal woman.³³ This incident assumed immense importance through being brought to the attention of Arthur, the directors of the Company in England, and the British Secretary of State. Had it not been for the faction fighting within the Company, to Curr's use of the episode as a weapon in his conflict with Goldie, it is likely that the incident would simply have been added to the numerous killings that took place on the isolated stock runs of the Company's property.

Goldie reported the killing of the Aboriginal woman to Curr, in a matter of fact way, on September 16, 1829. He described the sighting of a group of Aborigines whilst he was engaged in erecting a shed. Seeing an opportunity of capturing some of them, he collected four of his men, and together they set off, armed with one gun and "a couple of axes". Goldie described the capture and murder as follows:

On getting within a hundred yards of them we were observed and they began to make off. I ordered the men to keep outside while I took to the scrub. This had the effect and the natives kept along the sands. Russell fired at one while she was taking to the scrub and shot her. She was very badly hit about the bottom and belly and she must soon have died. I rode down another woman in the scrub and before I returned with her the man had killed the other. The woman that was shot had a child about six years old (a girl) who we also got.³⁴

During the next two months a bitter correspondence ensued between Goldie and Curr regarding the event. Given Curr's indignation, Goldie demanded to know why Curr had not censured him when he had informed him of his participation in a previous shooting party against the Aborigines at Burleigh. According to Goldie, Curr had told him that he wished to confine the Company's directors

conciliatory policies to Cape Grim and that Goldie might "do here [i.e. Surrey and Hamshire Hills] as I chose in that respect".³⁵

Curr wrote that the Burleigh case was self-defence as the men had been surrounded and speared by Aborigines the day before. Rather than remaining silent on the earlier episode, Curr wrote that he had "approved of what you had done". The present case was different as no previous provocation had taken place. Curr admitted that it was useless to carry out the "merciful designs" of the Company at the Surrey and Hamshire Hills, but that "no word or deed of mine has ever tended to authorise the perpetration of such a crime as has been committed at Emu Bay".³⁶

Goldie was incensed over Curr's portrayal of himself as a person motivated by humanitarian concerns and his attempted association of Goldie with the other Company employees as murderers. Fearing that Curr would use his position as the Company's chief agent to misrepresent his action, Goldie sent two letters to Arthur to explain his position. He enclosed Curr's letters to him. Although not departing radically from his first version of the incident, in the first letter to Arthur, Goldie tried to modify its impact. He maintained that he only intended the axes to be used for protection and that Russell, that man who fired the gun, did not know he was shooting at a woman. He did now admit, however, that an axe was used to kill the woman. He justified the incident by arguing that the Aborigines had destroyed stock and that Russell had been speared in September, 1828. Goldie then attempted to cast doubt on Curr's motives for taking up the issue by pointing to the ill-will which Curr bore him. He claimed that revenge was at the bottom of it and that Curr wished to use the event to annoy

him and if possible, involve him in a murder trial.³⁷

In the second letter, Goldie placed more asperities on Curr's motives for instigating legal proceedings. He maintained that Curr was taking a hypocritical stance, and as proof, he stated that Curr had offered spirits "to the first person who would bring him a head". He pointed out that Curr's explanation of his silence on the Burleigh shooting party episode and his distinction between that case and the present was invalid as it was "all conjecture" as to whether the Aborigines involved were those that had previously attacked the Company's property and employees.³⁸

As the magistrate for the area, Curr had the responsibility of conducting an inquiry, but he seemed reluctant to begin.³⁹ It was more than a month before he set out for Emu Bay to start investigations. Perhaps the reason for his hesitation was that if he found Goldie and the others guilty of murder or being accessory to it, then his good relations vis a vis the other employees would be jeopardized. He could be accused of using his secondary position as magistrate to victimize Goldie who was known to be his enemy. However, on December 16, being unable to forestall the matter any longer, he set out for Emu Bay.

In his report on the inquiry written three days later, Curr reversed his previous opinion on the case. He now claimed that the killing of the woman did not legally constitute murder. He based this conclusion on his interpretation of the November, 1828 Proclamation which established martial law in certain areas of the Colony. The effect of this Proclamation, according to Curr,

was not only to remove the Aborigines from the protection of the law, but to make the "wanton use of arms if productive of death", even of defenseless women and children, not a crime. Injunctions against such inhumane actions were addressed, he stated, "solely to the feelings and clemency of the Colonists, in order to mitigate the severity of a painful though necessary measure, and without making the disregard of it penal". The destruction of the Aboriginal woman at Emu Bay was thus not a case of murder, but "precisely such an infraction of a strong injunction of His Excellency as ought to be made known to him".⁴⁰ Given this interpretation of the legal aspects of the case, Curr confined his investigation to one deposition, that from Thomas Watson. Although not present at the incident, Watson had been given an account of it soon afterwards by the participants. His statement agreed in all major respects with that given by Goldie in his correspondence with Arthur.⁴¹

Arthur realized the significance of this inquiry as a test case of the legal implications of martial law. He presented Curr's report of the inquiry, together with Curr's former correspondence on the case, to the Solicitor General, Alfred Stephen, requesting his opinion on the correctness of Curr's interpretation of the legal position of the participants.⁴² Stephen, in reply, stressed the "great importance" of the case, whatever the decision:

If the killing of the poor woman be held a crime cognisable by the common Law, the effect of the Proclamation will be for ever afterwards destroyed. Few would with alacrity risk their lives in the pursuit of these people, if aware that for every life destroyed, the party taking it might be com-

pelled to answer for it at the risk of his own ... If on the other hand, the killing of the woman, and that under the circumstances of extreme barbarity, be held justifiable or to be an act of which a Court of Law can take no cognisance, the consequences to humanity will be still more deplorable.⁴³

Given these implications of any decision, he felt it would be "most injurious" if the transaction were publicly discussed.

In his interpretation of the legal position of Goldie and the other participants, Stephen agreed in large measure with Curr. Thus the Proclamation on martial law meant that the capture of one woman by Goldie and the shooting of another by Russell was legal since under its provisions all Aborigines were, within certain limits, "on the footing of open enemies to the King".⁴⁴ However, he was not so sure about the subsequent axe attack on the woman by Sweetling. He felt there was a point in time when an open enemy taken prisoner was under the protection of the King. Thus if a captive Aborigine was killed sometime after being taken prisoner, this would constitute murder. In the present case, he felt unable to decide whether the woman had received the fatal blow after being accepted as a prisoner. He directed that Curr be requested to inquire further as to the exact circumstances of Sweetling's attack with the axe. He concluded that Goldie and the others in the party were not implicated in an illegal act.⁴⁵

The issue now turned on Sweetling's axe blow. Previously neither Curr or Goldie had attached particular significance to this. Curr now questioned Goldie on the exact sequence and nature of events. Goldie gave the following account:

I saw the native woman who was killed at Emu Bay on the 21st August last, as she was just expiring. She had received a gunshot wound in the lower part of her body: it went right through her. I saw a wound on her neck on going back a second time some hours afterwards when she was dead. The wound on the neck was trifling, like a lancet cut. I should not have observed it if I had not been told.⁴⁶

Curr concluded that Sweetling was innocent of murder since Goldie's evidence established that the gunshot would was the cause of death and not the axe blow.⁴⁷

It becomes clear if one examines the various accounts of the event that Goldie's deposition deliberately distorted the facts, his aim being to protect Sweetling. When Goldie wrote to Arthur earlier in October 1829, he maintained that the axe blow had hit the jugular vein and that the woman had died instantly from this blow. Thus, when he came in from the scrub with the other woman, he found that Sweetling's woman was already dead.⁴⁸ At this latest inquiry he wished to minimize the importance of the axe blow. He therefore claimed that the blow had not killed her instantly, the wound being so "trifling" he would have barely noticed it. According to this account, when he returned from the scrub she was "just expiring" and it was only two hours later that he actually saw her dead.⁴⁹

At this stage, these discrepancies were not remarked upon. If Arthur or Burnett noticed them, their silence can be explained by their unwillingness to reopen a case with such potentially contentious implications. Curr was not in a position to notice the discrepancies as he had not sighted Goldie's earlier letters to Arthur.

The Company's directors' response was predictable. There was much lamentation that a respected employee of the Company could be involved in such an event. Great stress was laid on the lack of expression of horror or regret in Goldie's written report of the event. The directors felt that if such sentiments had been expressed, Goldie would have been free from association with the criminal action. They concluded with a plea to treat the Aborigines as "fellow creatures" and expressed their hope that the Aborigines might still be brought to "a proper state of feeling".⁵⁰

The matter would have been left there except that news of the woman's killing reached the Colonial Office in England.⁵¹ In March, 1830, the Under Secretary, Hay, directed Arthur to acquaint the Secretary of State, Sir George Murray, with full particulars of the episode.⁵² This was followed a month later with another communication on the matter, this time from Murray himself. He requested Arthur to inform him of the steps he had taken to bring to trial the persons implicated. The subject matter of this despatch was more general and serious concern was expressed about the state of relations between the Aborigines and settlers. Arthur was not directly criticized, but Murray indicated that his handling of the situation was in some doubt.⁵³

Murray felt so strongly about this issue that he informed the directors of the Company that unless they removed Goldie from their service, he would intervene to have him dismissed.⁵⁴ It is difficult to determine what motivated Murray to take issue on this particular event. Murray was not conspicuous for advanced views on the treatment of colonial peoples and it was not until the mid-1830s that humanitarianism became influential in the Colonial

Office. One can only assume that Murray was dismayed by the gruesome details of the killing and was led by this horror to request an investigation. Given the Colonial Office's approval of Arthur's November 1828 Proclamation, which invoked martial law against the Aborigines in the settled districts, it was rather too late for indignation about the death of one Aboriginal woman.

Arthur replied to the Under Secretary's request for information in August, 1830, stating that it was "not within his power" to submit details of this inquiry into the Goldie Affair.⁵⁵ In the meantime, he wrote to Curr requesting a copy of his last letter on the subject. Curr replied on September 4, enclosing a copy of the letter. He took the opportunity to make some comments on the affair which threw doubt on the deposition Goldie had made before him on April 19, 1830. Curr had based his final opinion of the case on this deposition.⁵⁶ Curr quoted a statement made by Goldie to the directors of the VDL Company on February 23, 1830. This was before Goldie was aware of the Solicitor General's interpretation of law applying to the case, that is, that Sweetling's axe blow might be considered murder. In this statement to the directors, Goldie maintained that Sweetling's blow had "touched the jugular vein when she instantly died", and that, by the time he came from the scrub, the woman was completely dead.⁵⁷ This account of the event was similar to that given in Goldie's first detailed letter to Arthur in October, 1829,⁵⁸ and contrasted with Goldie's later description of the axe wound as "trifling", and not immediately productive of death.⁵⁹ As mentioned before, Curr had not sighted Goldie's letters to Arthur and this explains why he had not picked up the discrepancy earlier. It was only in July, 1830, that he became aware of the exact details of the account that

that Goldie had given to the directors. Curr maintained that if this earlier and "probably correct" version of the story had not been altered in April, Sweetling would have been found guilty of murder. Curr concluded that it was now too late to establish whether the axe blow had caused the woman's death since "there is no chance of establishing it without W. Goldie's evidence, and probably, considering his former evidence, not with it".⁶⁰

Arthur chose to ignore this new information. He was thus able to inform the Colonial Office in November, 1830, that he had endeavoured to promote a judicial inquiry into the outrage but that "although it is much to be regretted", the person who struck the woman with an axe could not be charged with murder. On the other hand, he pointed out that this man had recently been speared by Aborigines. As a further mitigating factor, he stressed the VDL Company employees' exposure to Aboriginal attacks. Arthur attempted to sidestep his responsibility for bringing the guilty parties to justice by stressing the "unfortunate misunderstanding" within the VDL Company. It was his duty, according to Arthur, "to avoid mixing the government up with any of their [the Company's] private transactions".⁶¹

We do not know whether such a reply would have satisfied Murray, for by the time this despatch reached England, he had been replaced by Viscount Goderich. Although Goderich was sympathetic to the growing movement of concern for indigenous colonial populations, he found nothing to criticize in Arthur's handling of the case. He reiterated Arthur's rather irrelevant concern for non-interference "in disputes between the Servants of the Company relating to the private transactions of the parties or to

matters immediately connected with the affairs of their employees".⁶²

As A.G.L. Shaw has pointed out, all mention of the Goldie Affair was excluded from the published despatches in the 1831 Parliamentary Paper on the Tasmanian Aborigines.⁶³ The existence of a vocal humanitarian lobby within Britain ensured this. The Goldie Affair could be embarrassing to the government on a number of grounds. Firstly, just the revelation of such a brutal murder would not have been welcome. Such an occurrence would reflect unfavourably on the government's policies towards Aborigines in the colonies. Secondly, Arthur's dropping of the issue due to a legal technicality could be subject to criticism. Lastly, the exposure of Stephen's report on the legal position of the participants would have proved embarrassing. This report made it clear that the operation of martial law in VDL completely violated one of the main principles of British policy towards the Aborigines, that is, equal protection before the law of both Aborigines and colonists.

Later History of Relations Between the VDL Company and the Aborigines

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a number of prominent settlers were asked to give their opinions on some questions presented to them by the Aboriginal Committee in the first few months of 1830. Curr's answers to these questions were amongst the most intelligible and rational of the extreme settler viewpoint.

After giving a brief account of hostilities on VDL Company property, Curr made some comments designed to establish an apparent

fair minded approach to the question. Pilfering, he explained, did not concern him, since "it is probable they see no difference between our taking their Kangaroos and their taking our flour and sugar". On the other hand, "strong measures" were necessary to deal with the slaughter of stock since this could have "no other motive than our expulsion". He placed responsibility on the whites for initiating hostilities and even stated that the reason a good understanding with the Aborigines was unattainable was the likelihood of aggression by whites and subsequent retaliation by the Aborigines. The most that could be hoped for was an "armed truce". Curr stated openly that the time would arrive when the continuation of white settlement would require the destruction of the Aborigines. Until that time, it would be "criminal" to be anything but merciful. When the government realized that conciliation was useless, resolute action was needed: "The matter will end as all other matters have ended in other ages and parts of the world, by the extermination of the weaker race".⁶⁴

Curr had anticipated such a course of action as early as 1828 in his correspondence with the Company directors. At that stage, Curr could have only viewed the Aborigines as a nuisance; he did not even claim that they posed a serious threat to the continuation of the Company's operations. His position seems simply to have been motivated by a desire to remove an annoying presence from the land. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Curr felt strongly alienated from the natural environment of VDL during his first visit to the island. His residence in the untouched north west could only have intensified his sense of alienation and unbelonging. The natural obstacles to successful farming

proved enormous in the first ten years of the Company's operations, to some they seemed impossible.⁶⁵ Such a struggle to create a viable settlement probably increased Curr's view of the surroundings as hostile and ungiving and the Aborigines in his mind, were identified with this environment. To civilize the land was to efface its natural characteristics and in the case of "pests" such as the Aborigines, the solution was extermination. Curr was conscious of the humanitarian designs of the Company directors and the local government, and thus he veiled his advocacy of extirpation with talk of concern for these "poor beings". His actions and even the details of his public statements, made a mockery of such sentiments.

A.L. Meston has treated Curr's views on the Aborigines favourably in his book on the VDL Company. This is surprising given Meston's thorough reading of the Company papers and his long interest in the Tasmanian Aborigines. One can only suppose that he has allowed his positive assessment of Curr's role in the early development of north western Tasmania to colour his opinion. He based his view of Curr mainly on two incidents. The first was Curr's capture and "kindly treatment" of an Aboriginal boy in 1829.⁶⁶ This sixteen year old youth was forcibly held on board a ship, but this is ignored by Meston. When one bears in mind that Curr was simultaneously advocating extermination and turning a blind eye to numerous outrages committed by the Company's servants, it is difficult to see this as anything but a cynical manoeuvre on Curr's part to convince the Company of his dedication to the Company's policy of conciliation. He thus made much of this experiment to the directors.⁶⁷ The other incident quoted by Meston needs no comment. It seems that Curr gave a reward to a shepherd, John McKenzie, for

not shooting a group of looting Aborigines when he had the opportunity.⁶⁸

Three other examples of Curr's behaviour further illustrate the incorrectness of Meston's view of Curr. The first was Curr's response to the government's call in September, 1830, for all settlers to co-operate in the coming Black Line. On receipt of Arthur's directive, Curr sent the following letter to George Robson, superintendant of the Company's establishments at the Hamshire and Surrey Hills:

You will not receive these orders⁶⁹ until the contemplated movement is over, nor if you did could possibly contribute any assistance to the general movement from the remoteness of your establishment... you may remotely contribute to the great object in view by disturbing any native parties you may be able to find in your district... in that case it will be incumbent upon you to take such active measures against them so as to shew them that the Hamshire and Surrey Hills are not to be a resting place for them...⁷⁰

A similar letter was sent to Hellyer, architect and surveyor for the Company.

In his treatment of G.A. Robinson, Curr further displayed his unsympathetic view of the course of conciliation. The following are extracts from two letters written during Robinson's first visit to Company territory in September, 1830. To the Colonial Secretary he wrote:

Although Mr. Robinson might succeed in opening a friendly communication with some of the aborigines, he certainly has done nothing which will in any degree alter our relations with the tribes that visit the Surrey Hills. Towards them we stand in the same or rather a worse relation than

we did at this time last year... his plans with certain modifications, on different parts of the coast at the same time, might succeed in coming to an understanding with a majority of even the hostile tribes. All I would say, is, that until this be done, and it will require time, we are as insecure as ever.⁷¹

To Hellyer, he wrote of Robinson: "He is an enthusiast in his cause, but we must remember that none but an enthusiast would ever have undertaken the mission he is upon, and this in my opinion exceeds all his singularities."⁷²

Curr carried his skepticism of the value of Robinson's work to the point of withholding valuable supplies and other assistance.⁷³ He made an outward show of co-operation but was obstructive at every point. This lack of support was a serious handicap to Robinson's work in the isolated regions of the north west. When leaving Curr, after his second visit to Company property in August, 1832, Robinson declared to him that "I would rather pick limpets up off the beach and continue to live as I had done on the animals of the forest rather than come to them for anything".⁷⁴ Curr was aware that Robinson might present an unfavourable view of the Company's treatment of the Aborigines. He was particularly concerned about Robinson's possible assertion that the Company instigated hostilities at Circular Head and Woolnorth. He directed Hellyer to ensure that he established the Aborigines' blame for initiating conflict in these areas if questioned on this by Robinson.⁷⁵

Curr proved an even more serious handicap to Robinson's efforts by supporting Alexander McKay when he massacred four Aborigines in late 1831. McKay had been employed by Robinson in an earlier con-

ciliatory expedition. Robinson had a poor opinion of him which was partly due to McKay's attempt to gain credit for his independent efforts at capturing Aborigines while working under Robinson.⁷⁶

Robinson also had genuine misgivings about McKay's suitability for work with the Aborigines. According to Robinson, McKay had cohabited with some Aboriginal women while left in charge of some Aborigines on Swan Island.⁷⁷

Although the Aboriginal Committee was aware of Robinson's unfavourable opinion of McKay, they gave him permission and promise of payment for conducting a capture expedition. The Committee maintained that the level of conflict necessitated that "every means should be adopted to carry into effect the intentions of the government".⁷⁸ Robinson's misgivings about McKay proved well founded. Before the end of the year, McKay had killed four Aborigines while capturing as many. These actions took place on VDL Company property and McKay had been assisted by two Company employees.

McKay was concerned about the likely government response to his actions. He requested Curr to write to the Aboriginal Committee to explain the circumstances of the deaths. Curr thoroughly approved of McKay's actions. He maintained that three of the Aborigines killed were members of a tribe which had recently killed a Company servant. The fourth was "unavoidably sacrificed in an attempt to parley with a Tribe".⁷⁹ To Curr, McKay's direct methods were far preferable to Robinson's and he stated that if McKay was given permission to undertake another expedition, the Company would give him full support.

Arthur was also pleased with McKay's "success". McKay was given a free pardon for his work and two other members of the party were rewarded with tickets of leave. The killings did not give rise to any censure and McKay was allowed to go on another expedition.⁸⁰

Robinson was outraged that McKay's actions could be sanctioned and that McKay could be permitted to lead a further expedition.⁸¹ He doubted that the killings had taken place in the way described by Curr and some months later, while conversing with Aborigines on Flinders Island, these suspicions were confirmed. In a letter sent to the Colonial Secretary in March, he gave the following version of the massacre of the Aborigines:

I learnt also that the four natives brought in by McKay were not among those that speared the Company's messenger;... It would appear... that as soon as the natives had returned to rest, the party by a preconceived measure seized upon this opportunity for an attack, and instantly fired upon their encampment. At the same moment rushing upon and attacking them with the butt end of their pieces, three aborigines were shot dead... they then seized upon one boy, two men and one woman and made them captives.⁸²

The fourth Aborigine had been killed on a separate occasion. McKay had hidden behind a tree, and shot the man when he ran away upon observing McKay. Another Aborigine captured after supposed "desperate struggle" was actually a friendly Aborigine who had been one of Robinson's attendants until recently.⁸³

Robinson's disclosure of this information was ignored. Arthur was more likely to accept Curr's version of the killings if only for reasons of political expediency. Plemley points to another reason relating to the respective social positions of Curr and Robinson, why Robinson was less likely to be believed:

... Robinson was in a very different social class to the settlers and officials: their word was believed automatically by those in command. The whole battle with officialdom and others which Robinson had on his hands - in addition to the difficulties of the service - right from the beginnings of his work, is largely to be seen in these terms. Robinson had to convince by events and his opinion had little weight without such backing.⁸⁴

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For almost ten years after the cessation of hostilities in the rest of VDL, warfare between Aborigines and Company servants took place. Until he was removed from Company service in 1841, Curr made continual representations to Hobart for a military party for protection.⁸⁵ In the heat of the Aboriginal/settler conflict in the late 1820s and early 1830s, Arthur had been very reluctant to afford such protection.⁸⁶ Even when under pressure from the Colonial Office⁸⁷ he claimed that to station a military party at such a remote area was unadvisable since an officer would have to be sent.⁸⁸ He called upon Curr to instruct the Company employees to practise caution and conciliation.⁸⁹ Given Curr's distain for such methods, this advice could only have exacerbated the ill-feeling Curr felt towards Arthur. In 1834, when quite serious depredations were made against Company flocks, Arthur still refused to co-operate with the Company's demands for a military party. He even ignored the representations of the local police magistrate, A.W. Horne.⁹⁰ Robinson's son was sent out in 1836 to capture the remaining tribe but this proved a failure. One feels that Arthur and later Governor Franklin were motivated to refuse the Company's requests for protection by their prejudice against the existence of an independent agricultural company.

Finally, in 1841, Curr pleaded his case to the directors of the Company. He enclosed copies of correspondence with the Colonial Secretary to indicate the indifference of the local government to his requests. By this stage, Curr had dropped all pretensions of support for conciliatory ideals, accusing those who supported the Aboriginal case of "false philanthropy". His comments were typical of the man on the spot who despised the influence of the humanitarians in England and the colonies:

If only a shepherd or two are murdered by the blacks no one here or in England will concern themselves about it, but if unhappily one or two natives are destroyed, Sir John [Franklin] will be held up as a most benignant man and I as little better than a murderer, for even the Colonists will patronize this poor remnant of the aboriginal race, now that they have enjoyed perfect impunity for many years from their spears and fire brand, and it is not at all improbable that the Society in London for the protection of the native tribes of the Colony would take the matter up.⁹¹

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 5

1. The following details of the history of the VDL Company are taken from A.L. Meston, The Van Diemen's Land Company, 1825-1842, Launceston, n.d.
2. Narrative of a Voyage to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, Edinburgh, 1822.
3. Meston, op.cit., p.21. Disputes on the location of the Company's grant continued for twenty two years. It was only at the end of 1847 that the British government issued the title deeds.
4. See his Introduction and Conclusion to *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*, p.58.
6. See ADB, I, pp.269-271.
7. E. Curr, An Account of the Colony of Van Diemen's Land, London, 1824.
8. *ibid.*, p.116.
9. *ibid.*, p.110.
10. *ibid.*, p.118.
11. For example, during the late 1830s, Curr refused to pay part of the salary of the police magistrate stationed at Circular Head. This was against the Company directors' instructions.
12. Sketch of the History of Van Diemen's Land, London, 1832, p.36.
13. See for example, Directors to Curr, July 6, 1830, Despatch No.18 (VDL Company Papers, Tasmanian State Archives).
14. Meston, op.cit., p.51.
15. *ibid.*, p.52.
16. Curr to Directors, February 28, 1828, Despatch No.11 (VDL Company Papers).
17. Diary entires for June 16, August 10, 1830, Plomley, op.cit., pp.175-176, 196.
18. Diary entries for June 21,24, 1830, *ibid.*, pp.181-183.
19. Curr to Directors, February 28, 1828, loc.cit.
20. *ibid.*

21. Directors to Curr, June 11, 1828, enclosed in Murray to Arthur, August 29, 1828.
22. Pearce to Murray, August 27, enclosed in Murray to Arthur, *ibid.*
23. This explanation of the convicts' inhumane treatment of the Aborigines was adopted by C. Turnbull in his Black War, Melbourne, 1948. See esp. Chapter 2.
24. Robinson, when recording his interview with Chamberlain, one of the shepherds involved, commented that he related the act of killing thirty Aborigines with such indifference that "my blood chilled". He made similar comments about Gunshannon's attitudes towards the massacre. Diary entries for June 16, 1830, August 10, 1830, Plomley, *op.cit.*, pp.176,196.
25. J.L. Stokes, Discoveries in Australia... in the Years 1837-38-39-40-41-42-43, Vol.2, London, 1846, pp.458-459.
26. *ibid.*, p.459.
27. Curr to Directors, October 8, 1828. Despatch No.45 (V.D.L. Company Papers).
28. Curr to Colonial Secretary, December 17, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/316/7578); Curr to Directors, November 16, 1829. Despatch No.100 (V.D.L. Company Papers).
29. Diary entry for September 13, 1830, Plomley, *op.cit.*, p.210.
30. *ibid.*
31. R. Hare, The Voyage of the Caroline to Van Diemen's Land and Batavia in 1827-28, Ida Lee (ed.), London, 1927.
32. Goldie had come to VDL as the Company's agriculturalist in 1826.
33. Curr to Goldie, September 30, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/326/7578).
34. Goldie to Curr, September 16, 1829, enclosed in Curr to Colonial Secretary, September 30, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/330/7578). Robinson gave an account of the murder in his diary and in a letter to the Colonial Secretary. He described the woman, on perceiving her fate, shielding her child from the coming musket shot. The child was sent to Launceston and given to a storekeeper, where she died. Diary entry for August 4, 1830, Plomley, *op.cit.*, p.192; Diary entry for September 13, 1830, Plomley, *ibid.*, pp.210,434, n5; Robinson to Colonial Secretary, February, 1831 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.21).
35. Goldie to Curr, October 5, 1829, enclosed in Arthur to Hay, November 20, 1830.

36. Curr to Goldie, October 2, 1829 (C.S.O., 1/326/7578).
37. Goldie to Arthur, October 5, 1829, enclosed in Arthur to Hay, November 20, 1830.
38. Goldie to Arthur, November 18, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/326/7578).
39. Curr to Directors, December 11, 1829. Despatch No.103 (V.D.L. Company Papers).
40. Curr to Colonial Secretary, December 19, 1829, enclosed in Arthur to Hay, November 20, 1830.
41. Watson's deposition, December 17, 1829, enclosed in *ibid*.
42. Arthur to Solicitor General, January 26, 1830, enclosed in *ibid*.
43. Solicitor General to Arthur, February 3, 1830, enclosed in *ibid*.
44. *ibid*.
45. *ibid*.
46. Goldie's deposition, April 19, 1830, enclosed in *ibid*. *Emphasis added*.
47. Curr to Colonial Secretary, April 21, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/330/7578).
48. Goldie to Arthur, October 5, 1829, *loc.cit*.
49. Goldie's deposition, April 19, 1830, *loc.cit*.
50. Directors to Curr, July 6, 1830. Despatch No.18 (V.D.L. Company Papers).
51. I have been unable to ascertain who conveyed this information to the Colonial Office. The contemporary colonial press did not cover the episode.
52. Hay to Arthur, March 12, 1830.
53. Murray to Arthur, April 23, 1830.
54. Directors to Curr, September 22, 1830. Despatch No.28 (V.D.L. Company Papers).
55. Arthur to Hay, August 19, 1830.
56. Curr to Colonial Secretary, September 4, 1830.
57. Goldie to Company, February 23, 1830, enclosed in *ibid*.
58. Goldie to Arthur, October 5, 1829, *loc.cit*.

59. Goldie's deposition, April 19, 1830, loc.cit.
60. Curr to Colonial Secretary, September 4, 1830, loc.cit.
61. Arthur to Hay, November 20, 1830.
62. Howick to Arthur, June 8, 1831.
63. A.G.L. Shaw, Introduction to Copies of All Correspondence Between Lieutenant-Governor Arthur and his Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies... Van Diemen's Land, Facsimile edition, Hobart, 1971.
64. Curr to Aboriginal Committee, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/330/7578).
65. Meston comments that in the early stages of the Company's existence, the difficulties drove some Company servants to despair. Adey, originally one of the two Commissioners, found the prospect of forming a farming settlement in the wilderness so daunting, that he chose to live in Hobart on a reduced salary as the Company's agent. Meston, op.cit., pp.43ff.
66. *ibid.*, p.52.
67. *ibid.*
68. *ibid.*
69. Curr is referring to the two Government Orders, No.9 and No.11, issued in the Gazette on September 10 and 12. These directed a leve en masse for the forthcoming operations against the Aborigines.
70. Quoted in Plomley, op.cit., p.433, n.2.
71. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.238, n.162.
72. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.239, n.162.
73. See diary entries for August 8, September 28; February 18, 1834, *ibid.*, pp.640,660,843. For details of correspondence between Robinson and the Company servants over supplies and transportation, see *ibid.*, pp.689, n. 40; 693, n.88; 695-696, n.114.
74. Diary entry for August 23, 1834, *ibid.*, p.643.
75. *ibid.*, p.433, n.2.
76. McKay to Bedford, April 6, 1831; Robinson to Bedford, October 15, 1831 (Letters to Bedford, Mitchell Library).
77. Robinson to Bedford, April 16, 1831, *ibid.* Robinson renewed the charge of immoral relations against McKay when, in 1831 he took two women on two occasions to accompany him on his expeditions. Robinson claimed that McKay took these women

77. (cont.) for the purpose of "whoredom". Diary entry for December 12, 1831, Plomley, op.cit., pp.549-550.
78. Aboriginal Committee minutes, August 5, 1831 (C.S.O., 1/319/7578).
79. Curr to Charles Arthur, Secretary of Aboriginal Committee, November 19, 1831 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.34).
80. Arthur's memo, November 22, 1831 (C.S.O. 1/317/7578).
81. Diary entries for December 26, 1831; May 5, 1832, Plomley, op.cit., pp.565-566, 602; Robinson to Whitcomb, August 10, 1832 (Tasmanian Aborigines). An identical letter was sent to Rev. William Bedford, August 10, 1832 (C.S.O. 1/888/18835). These letters were strong attacks on McKay and, by implication, on government policy. Robinson wrote of McKay and his party going "forth again to glut their savage propensity for the blood of the persecuted aborigine". Robinson criticized the operation of martial law which made acts of murder, such as McKay's, legal. He quoted Locke to prove that the whites had no proper tenure to the country which made the Aborigines' subjection to "our sanguinary code" particularly obnoxious.
82. Robinson to Colonial Secretary, March 15, 1832 (Papers of G.A.R., Vol.21.).
83. *ibid.*
84. Plomley, op.cit., p.692, n. 80.
85. Curr to Colonial Secretary, December 17, 1829, October 29, 1831 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
86. It appears that Arthur once agreed to send a small military detachment in December, 1829. Curr to Colonial Secretary, February 5, 1830 (C.S.O. 1/330/7578).
87. Arthur to Hay, February 10, 1831.
88. *ibid.*
89. Arthur's minute on Curr's letter to the Colonial Secretary, December 17, 1829 (C.S.O. 1/316/7578).
90. Horne to Colonial Secretary, January 10, 1834 (C.S.O. 1/317/7578).
91. Curr to Directors, August 12, 1841, enclosed in Stanley to Franklin, February 26, 1842.

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