
THE ABORIGINAL AND THE CATTLEMAN

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE AWARD WAGES BATTLE IN THE N.T.

A great deal has been said and written for and against the North Australian Union's case for equal wages for Aborigines employed in the N.T. Pastoral Industry.

But the NAWU believes the issue is simple and straightforward enough: The Trade Union movement cannot allow the use of a pool of cheap labor in this or any industry.

The issue concerns not only the N.T. It will have a direct bearing on Aborigines and part-Aborigines employed on pastoral properties in other States, particularly Queensland and West Australia.

The NAWU believes a principle of unionism is involved that cannot be ignored by anybody in Australia. The following pages set out the events leading to the present stalemate and the NAWU attitude to it:—

The decision of the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission handed down on the 7th March, 1966, granted award wages and conditions to Aboriginal Workers on Pastoral Properties but set December the 1st, 1968 as entitled to the provisions the commencing date of the finding.

It was suggested by the Commission that the Union, the Pastoralists and the Government "consult with each other in an attempt to smooth the way for the Aborigines to the day when they have complete award coverage."

The Commission also "requests the parties, including the Commonwealth Government to consider an appropriate form of slow workers clause which would enable a slow workers permit to be obtained more easily than it is now."

The slow workers clause referred to by the Commission is the present slow workers provision in the Aluminium Industry Award as follows:

"(a) A person who, by reason of age or infirmity or **FOR ANY OTHER REASON**, is unable to earn the minimum wage prescribed by this award, may be employed at a rate less than the said minimum wage if the Secretary of the Queensland Branch of The Australian Workers Union, or the Industrial Registrar or the Deputy Industrial Registrar, Queensland in writing, certifies that the said person is unable to earn the said minimum wage.

(b) A request for a certificate shall only be considered by the Industrial Registrar or the Deputy Industrial Registrar, if it is refused by the said Secretary.

(c) If a request for a certificate be made to the Industrial Registrar or the Deputy Industrial Registrar, he shall, before issuing a certificate, allow the Union an opportunity to state any objections it may have in the matter.

(d) Any certificate issued shall state—

(i) The name of the person to be employed.

(ii) The nature of the proposed employment.

(iii) The name of the employer.

(iv) The wages to be paid.

(v) The grounds upon which it is given.

(e) A certificate given pursuant to this clause shall relate to one employee only and shall, unless renewed, be for a term not exceeding one year and a copy thereof shall be lodged with the Deputy Industrial Registrar, Queensland.

(f) This clause shall only apply in the State of Queensland."

Aboriginals will not be **LEGALLY** entitled to Award wages in the Pastoral Industry until 1/12/68.

However, it is not the intention of the North Australian Workers Union to sit by while wage and award conditions discrimination against Aboriginals continues to operate for another two and a half years.

Aboriginal workers can obtain Award rates of pay **NOW** on other jobs covered by N.T. Awards.

There is provision for unskilled labor under the following Awards and Determinations in the N.T.

The Commonwealth Railways, Determination 131 for the N.T.

The Commonwealth Works and Services Award (N.T.)

The Gold & Metaliferous (N.T.) Award.

The Northern Territory Administration Determination Wages Staff.

Uranium Mining Award (N.T.)

Shop Assistants' Award (N.T.)

Waterside Award (N.T.)

Brewery Award (N.T.)

Laundry Award (N.T.)

Hospital Determination (N.T.)

Motor Garages Award (N.T.)

Building Trades (General) Award N.T.

Building Trades (Civil Construction) Award N.T.

Commonwealth Hostels Agreement (N.T.)

School Cleaners' Determination (N.T.)

Australian Blue Metal Award (N.T.)

and others.

Under a recent Amendment to the Wards Employment Ordinance, 1853-64 assented to 26/1/66 after section three of the Principal Ordinance the following section is inserted:

"3A. This Ordinance does not affect the employment of a person where in respect of the employment of that person there is in force—

- (a) an Award or Determination made under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act; or
- (b) any other law which determines the terms and conditions of employment of a person."

Aboriginals are entitled to full Award rates — Now, IF EMPLOYED under the Awards.

Q. Why is the Government so anxious to maintain these aboriginal people on Pastoral properties in the N.T?

Q. Why is it necessary for the Government to require a phasing period until 1968 in order that the Aboriginals will be entitled to Award rates in 1968. SUBJECT TO THE SLOW WORKERS CLAUSE?

Q. Why did the Administrator of the N.T. say at a press conference on 4/5/66 "There is evidence that some of the elderly women Aborigines who left last week are returning to Newcastle Waters Stations from Elliott.

"Ten children attended Newcastle Waters School yesterday, three more than on Friday (Monday was a public holiday in the Northern Territory.)

"It was assumed the union would accept the responsibility for maintaining the Aborigines, or that the Aborigines would maintain themselves.

"The Administration could not accept responsibility for able-bodied males, or females without children, moved or brought to a settlement. But if arrangements were not made by the Union, normal provisions for maintenance would be made for children, pregnant women and women with children, and assistance would be given to those who wished to continue to receive pensions normally paid to them on pastoral properties.

"Welfare officers would do everything possible to ensure the health, education and welfare of children and mothers was not adversely affected. They would continue to encourage the children to attend school and seek the co-operation of parents to do this.

"Should Aborigines seek advice from Welfare Officers, the officers would discuss with the Aborigine any grounds for dissatisfaction, and would seek to resolve difficulties. In doing this the officer would act as a social worker, or 'best friend' of the Aborigine and not as a spokesman for the Government. He would not describe Government policy.

"During the conference, Mr Dean was asked questions concerning conditions of Aborigines already living on settlements and the manner in which social service payments were made to Aborigines living on pastoral properties.

"Mr Dean said later that all able-bodied adult Aborigines living on settlements were either employed of undertaking special training courses. Those receiving training were paid a training allowance.

"All these Aborigines were then charged for food supplied by the settlement authorities. The charges varied according to the income of the Aborigines.

"For those receiving only training allowances, the charges were low, and were designed to introduce the Aborigines to the need to accept responsibility for their own maintenance.

"Where large numbers of Aborigines lived on pastoral properties, the property management usually acted as an agent for the Department of Social Services in the payment of pensions, child endowment and maternity allowances.

"If the management was maintaining the Aborigines, arrangements were made for the allowances to be divided between the Aborigines and the managements according to a prepared formula.

"Should Aborigines receiving these benefits decide to leave their usual residence on a property, the management and Welfare Officers would both take action to ensure individual payments were made available to the Aborigine concerned at the most convenient location.

"The method used to transfer the place of payment would be similar to that used for payments to other people who moved from one place to another."

At a recent conference held in Sydney in April this year between the Pastoralists, Commonwealth Government and the North Australian Workers' Union the following proposals were tabled by the Government:

"Phasing Proposal

July, 1966	\$9.72	(\$6.32 plus \$3.40 (cost to pastoralist of supporting child); wife supported by pastoralist, other children by Government.)
July, 1967	\$15.12	(\$9.72 plus \$5.40 (cost to pastoralist of supporting wife), children other than 1st supported by Government.)
July, 1968	\$18.52	(\$15.12 plus \$3.40 (cost to Government of supporting 2nd child); children other than 1st and 2nd supported by Government.)
December, 1968	basic wage in award	(plus margins, loading and allowances as applicable; children other than 1st, 2nd and 3rd supported by Government in necessitous circumstances.)

The North Australian Workers' Union rejected the Proposals on these grounds:—

(1) That no Union would agree to a wage structure that was less than the basic wage.

(2) That the Aborigines were the full responsibility of the Government and not the Pastoralists.

(3) That the Government must immediately acquire land on Station Properties for the purpose of setting up Workshops and Training areas. So that the Aborigines would get training in OTHER THAN Pastoral Pursuits.

(4) That the Government must immediately encourage employers, outside the Pastoral properties, to engage Aboriginal workers.

(5) That the North Australian Workers' Union would, with the help of the whole Trade Union Movement, fight for the Aborigines to assert their NATURAL RIGHT, to secure the job of his choice at Award rates and conditions.

The recent action by the North Australian Workers' Union at Newcastle Waters Cattle Property in the N.T. was the beginning!

We have encouraged the Aboriginal Stockmen to leave the property to seek Award employment. 80 Aborigines including the wives and children and pensioners are camping on a Government Reserve at the township of Elliott. These people are being fed by the North Australian Workers' Union aided by the generous assistance of Southern Unions. 600 Aborigines are presently EMPLOYED in the Pastoral Industry in the N.T. Yet we have the amazing figure of 4000 Aboriginal people ATTACHED to the Pastoral Industry.

What is the Government doing for the 3400 not employed?

THIS QUESTION MUST BE ANSWERED AND SOLVED NOW — NOT IN 1968.

More assistance is needed if we, as Trade Unionists, are to carry the fight to a successful conclusion.

Authorised by P. CARROLL, Secretary
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