

Queensland Aborigines

Official Statistics of

Wages of Queensland Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders

Seized by the Department of Native Affairs

1937 - 1958

and still Retained

1962

The Queensland Government is holding close on £1 million of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' wages. This money has been seized and hoarded over a number of years.

Here are the official figures of moneys held in so-called Trust Accounts by the Department of Native Affairs, as published in Queensland Year Books, period 1938 - 1959 :

	Aboriginal	Torres Strait Islander	Total
1937	£29.154		
1939	£31.967		
1940	£235.004	£19,000	£254.004
1944	£303.544	£43,400	£346.944
1945	£310.063	£62,772	£372.835
1946	£320.103	£79,028	£399.131
1947	£388.129	£67,225	£455.354
1948	£356.759	£82,414	£439.173
1949	£316.697	£80,969	£397.666
1950	£320.102	£97,355	£417.457
1951	£349.897	£119,857	£469.754
1952	£382.278	£128,504	£510.782
1953	£436.083	£127,257	£563.340
1954	£678.491	£181,615	£860.106
1955	£749.985	£196,043	£946.028
1956	£620.039	£215,293	£835.332
1957	£660.074	£228,296	£888.370
1958	£745.216	£226,460	£971.676

It will be seen from the above that the Queensland Aborigines have been despoiled of, on an average, £46,270 of their earnings, per annum; £12,581 of this being the property of Torres Strait Islanders.

The wages of Aborigines "under the Act" are paid to the Department of Native Affairs. The amounts to be credited are entered in a ledger and duplicates are kept by the police (who are described in the Acts as Protectors) in the district in which the employe resides. When in need, which is most of the time, he must apply to a police officer "protector" for a small hand-out of his own money. This may or may not be refused, the most he can expect is that part of his earnings will be doled out to him in dribs and drabs. For any amount in excess of £20 he must apply in writing to the Director of Native Affairs stating his reasons for requiring the money. After waiting for weeks, or months, for a reply, it may come finally, in the form of a refusal. He has no right of appeal against the arbitrary decisions of an official of the D.N.A. - or a "protector." Matters are not simplified by the fact that most adult Aborigines in the North are quite illiterate.

Every so often the Queensland Government has been accused of robbing the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of their earnings. In reply to a charge of Apartheid made by Mr Dunstan M.P. (N.S.W.) and published in the Sydney Morning Herald (6.4.61), the Director of Native Affairs said: "That Queensland aboriginals have no control over their earnings and Savings Bank deposits is an old argument that has over the years been consistently refuted. Over the 12 months ended June 30th 1960 the amount deposited by aboriginals \*to Savings Bank accounts totalled £497,609. The withdrawals against these deposits were £495,544. These figures must be accepted as a rebuttal of Mr Dunstan's contention of the limit of the availability of deposits from earnings."

Neat, but not neat enough. What the Queensland Department of Native Affairs has done is square withdrawals with deposits for the year 1959 - 196) TO GET A SET OF FIGURES UPON WHICH CONTRADICTIONS MIGHT BE BASED, FIGURES WHICH COULD BE USED TO FOOL THE PUBLIC AND THE WORLD AT LARGE, a trick commonly known as "drawing a red herring across the path."

Moreover this money was not, as stated by Mr O'Leary, "deposited by aboriginals to their Savings Bank accounts" They are never in a position to deposit their earnings for THEY DO NOT RECEIVE THEIR WAGES which are collected by police "protectors."

Director of Native Affairs, Mr O'Leary has hotly denied that Aborigines are unable to recover their money. "Every facility is provided for aboriginals to withdraw, within reason, from their Savings Bank accounts" he stated in his 1960 Annual Report. Every facility is not provided, Queensland Aborigines have never, at any time, been issued with pass-books and they have no means of finding out how much has been deposited to their credit.

In his 1957 Annual Report Mr O'Leary stated of the "trust accounts" "Duplicates of these accounts are kept by the Protector of aboriginals in the district in which the aboriginal resides. A separate account for each individual is kept by the Director of Native Affairs. These Savings Bank deposits are entirely the property of the individual aboriginal, the Director of Native Affairs being the trustee of the accounts. No aboriginal is precluded from operating on his Savings Bank account for his immediate needs."

THE DIRECTOR OF NATIVE AFFAIRS SHOULD BE PUBLICLY CHALLENGED TO PROVE THAT HE IS SPEAKING THE TRUTH BY ALLOWING THE QUEENSLAND ABORIGINES TO HAVE PASS-BOOKS AND TO WITHDRAW THEIR WAGES.

The Queensland Government has no moral right to with-hold this money which is the property of the Aborigines who earned, and their descendants, for many of them are now dead, having lived and died in acute privation.

By this act of ruthless oppression the D.N.A. is denying the Aborigines the basic necessities of existence; sanitation, water, reasonable food, clothing, housing - and education. Because, in a state of semi-starvation they are forced to sleep in heaps like pigs on the bare earth they are infested by hookworm and ravaged by T.B.

Mr O'Leary has stated publicly that he is anxious to see co-operatives set up for the benefit of the Aborigines. If he is sincere about this he will release this money so that it may be available for this purpose.

The laws which governs the Aborigines of Queensland function under the pseudonym of the "Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act" Part 11 (3) of which reads :

(Exemption may be granted)

"on condition that all money or property belonging to such aboriginals and held in trust by a protector shall continue to be held in trust by such protector."

Part 1v, 16 (a) of the same Act reads :

(A protector may) "take possession of, retain, or dispose of any property of an aboriginal, whether real or personal."

J.W. Bleakley, late Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland from 1914 to 1942 mentioned in his book "The Aborigines of Australia" page 177, £200,000 of Aborigine earnings held by the Queensland Government, in 1933. This amount has since vanished from the records.

Unless some action is taken immediately to recover the Aboriginal earnings now held by the Department of Native Affairs it will very soon slip quietly into Consolidated Revenue and be gone forever.