

**ANALYSIS OF
MR. RUPERT MURDOCH'S ARTICLE
on
THE WEST AUSTRALIAN NATIVES
published in
"THE NEWS", ADELAIDE, FEBRUARY 1st, 1957**



Children of the Warburton Range

Now that all the Government Reports on the Warburton Range natives are to hand, and there has been time for a careful study to be made of each and every one of these documents, and also of the various reports dealing with the subject which have appeared in the Press, it has, at last, become possible to compare statements—and some amazing facts have come to light.

On February 1st, 1957, the Adelaide "News" published an article on the Warburton Range Aborigines, written by Rupert Murdoch. This article bristled with loose and false statements.

Here are a few of them:

POPULATION

Mr. Murdoch:

"At the very most there are only 400 natives in this huge area stretching over thousands of square miles".

Medical Report of Party appointed by the W.A. Government and led by Dr. W. S. Davidson, Deputy Commissioner of Public Health:

"Altogether 483 natives were examined".

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Pastor Doug. Nicholls, M.B.E.:

"Re the Giles weather station: It was estimated that there were at least 100 aborigines near at hand. About half this number only were inspected by the Health Department doctors".

Mr. W. L. Grayden, M.L.A.:

"At Giles Weather Station the Medical Party saw fifty natives although there were over one hundred in the area".

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Mr. Murdoch:

"It is true that a group of 40 natives (men, women and children) came into the Warburton Mission from the desert in the far north-west late last year . . . Two of the women died".

(These were all bush natives who had never before seen white people, they were unable to speak the language of the natives in the area).

Government Medical Report:

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"No real bush native was seen".

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So there is documentary evidence to prove that, at the very lowest estimate, 571 aborigines exist in the Warburton Range area.

Report of Select Committee:

"It is estimated that there is in the vicinity of four hundred natives in the Laverton area and a further three or four hundred or more on the Warburton reserve. In addition the Warburton group is augmented by another two or three hundred or so natives who periodically visit the Warburton Range from the South Australian border".

The Warburton Range Mission closes down for 3 months of the year, December, January and February, during which time the natives are dispersed.

Mr. Murdoch visited the Warburton Mission for 24 hours during January, at a time when the natives were scattered throughout the 'thousands of square miles' of the reserve, (in temperatures often in the vicinity of 120 deg. in the shade) desperately struggling to find food and water in their fight for survival.

With all the resources at its disposal, the Western Australian Government has stated that it would be impossible to take a census of the natives on the reserve, yet Mr. Murdoch, with superlative assurance—and with the total disregard for facts—has stated quite unequivocally that there are not more than 400.

STARVATION AND THIRST

Report of Select Committee—Nov. 13th to Dec. 12th, 1956:

"Two . . . children, although possibly seven and nine years old, had arms which on the upper portions were no more than an inch in diameter, and their thighs would be little thicker, there being practically only skin and bones at these points. One child weighed not more than a stone and a half and the other was possibly even lighter".

"Members of the Committee find it hard to visualise that any people, anywhere in the world, could be more in need of assistance than the natives in the inland area of Western Australia who were investigated. Their immediate requirements are adequate water, food and medical attention".

"The natives lack even the most basic necessities of life".

"Immediate food and medical attention are urgently necessary for these people and permanent provision for them a pressing obligation on the Government".

Mr. Murdoch, February 1st, 1957:

"ABORIGINES ARE NOT SICK, STARVING".

"NO ABORIGINES IN THE CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN RESERVES ARE DYING OF THIRST OR STARVATION — OR DISEASE".

"These fine native people have never enjoyed better conditions".

"All were obviously well-fed and happy".

Pastor Doug. Nicholls, M.B.E., 2nd Expedition, Feb. 19th to March 8th, 1957:

"My people are starving, everywhere we went they pleaded for food and water; it is terrible".

"The Western Australian Select Committee which investigated conditions in the first place—they were men of all political colours—knows and admits it. Everything the Select Committee said was true, only it is far worse than they described it".

"We have shoved them off to rot without food, without medical attention, without pity or thought".

"I wish I had not gone to the Warburton Ranges, I wish I hadn't seen the pitiable squalor, the sights of my people starving—the most shocking sights I have ever seen. Never, never can I forget".

Mr. S. E. Lapham, M.L.A., 2nd Expedition, Feb. 19th to March 8th, 1957:

"Everywhere one goes on the reserve the plea amongst the natives who have contact with civilization is for food. They are willing to work long hours for simple rations. Food is urgently required by all these natives and it should be provided immediately.

Report of Select Committee, Nov. 13th to Dec. 12th, 1956:

"No permanent water exists on the reserve and therefore there is little bird or animal life".

"It is difficult to conceive fully the implications of the natives' constant struggle to obtain sufficient water for drinking purposes. It must be remembered that the natives usually move about the area in family groups, since the country and water available will not support large numbers. The natives struggle in such groups from water hole to water hole, which holes are frequently 20 or more miles apart. On these journeys the natives must carry the younger children, while the older ones are required to walk, in some cases, carrying a younger child. They carry all their possessions—spears, biddis (wooden containers which sometimes hold a few pints of water) and any clothing or blankets which they may have obtained. In addition they must obtain sufficient food for themselves and their children en route. Since the country traversed is either mulga scrub, sand dunes or spinifex, and the weather—particularly during the summer—extremely hot (temperatures of 120 deg. in the shade not being uncommon) the suffering and hardships entailed will be readily imagined".

"The supplies of water available, on the route which they traverse, for the drinking requirements of the natives who have made or make the journey from the Warburton Ranges to Cosmo Newbery are inadequate and natives have perished of thirst while attempting the journey".

Mr. Murdoch, February 1st, 1957:

"Although there was little rain since *Mr. Grayden's inquiry, I saw a beautiful natural waterhole yesterday".

**Official Report of Rainfall in Warburton Range area
obtained from Weather Bureau:**

12/12/56:	6 points.
16/1/57:	2 points.
17/1/57:	4 points.
20/1/57:	1 point.
22/1/57:	4 points.
25/1/57:	27 points.

44 points.

Added to this, just prior to his visit, a local thunderstorm filled the waterhole seen by Mr. Murdoch.

* (Mr. Murdoch has referred, all through his article, to the 'Grayden Inquiry' and/or the 'Grayden Report'; this report was in no sense the sole responsibility of Mr. Grayden, but was, in actual fact, the findings of the Select Committee appointed by the Western Australian Government, to inquire into 'Native Welfare Conditions in the Laverton-Warburton Range Area'. The findings and Report submitted by this Committee—which consisted of 5 Parliamentarians comprising all political parties—was completely unanimous in every detail. Mr. Grayden was the Chairman).

No one having any regard for truth would dare to make a definite

assertion that there are no people dying of thirst or starvation or disease in an area covering many thousands of square miles, merely because he had not located any. A statement of this kind, made under such conditions would seem to indicate very slipshod reasoning.

INDEED, IT HAS SINCE BEEN PROVED THAT ABORIGINES ARE DYING OF HUNGER AND THIRST IN THIS AREA, FOR A FEW WEEKS LATER MR. GRAYDEN RETURNED, AND IN THE PRESENCE OF PASTOR DOUG. NICHOLLS, MR. S. E. LAPHAM AND SERGEANT ANDERSON OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT, MADE THE COLOUR FILM WHICH HAS INCENSED AND HORRIFIED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA.

It would seem that Mr. Murdoch did not know where to look, because **IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PHOTOGRAPH—AND THAT IN THE PRESENCE OF WITNESSES—PEOPLE WHO DO NOT EXIST!** Indeed, in some cases the witnesses appear in the film.

Perhaps the following extract from the Report of the Select Committee may help to explain Mr. Murdoch's failure to find these natives:

"The Committee has been informed that it is the experience of those who have travelled in the area that in most parts of the reserve it is possible at all times to see the smoke of one or more hunting fires (the natives burn spinifex to drive out lizards, snakes and any game that might be available). When the traveller drives to the fires, although tracks and other indications of natives are apparent, natives are never seen. If the party is accompanied by natives from the area, they will call to the other natives. The latter, reassured emerge . . . It is stated that it would be possible to travel the length of the reserve and although native fires would be frequently seen no natives would be encountered unless the means referred to were resorted to make contact".

The Warburton Mission is situated on the fringe of the thousands of square miles of the native reserve, less than 30 miles inside the boundary.

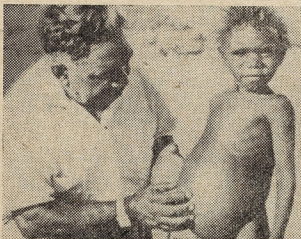
We are informed that Mr. Murdoch was accompanied a few miles out from the Mission by Mr. Green, the Superintendent of the Mission; that **HE DID NOT HAVE A NATIVE GUIDE, AND THAT HE DID NOT GO BEYOND THE WHITE MAN'S OUTPOST!**

WHAT THE FILM REVEALED

The film of these starving natives on the Warburton Reserve was shown on GTV 9 — It was called 'Manslaughter' and we were told that every Australian was guilty of manslaughter as long as this horror continued. The film has also been widely screened in the Southern States. The "Advocate", April 25th, 1957 (Catherine Kaye):

"In GTV's film we saw a baby and his mother being loaded on to a truck; the mother couldn't feed the baby, mother and baby were dying, and would have died had help not come. You can read about it without feeling anything much except wonder that such conditions can exist; but you can't see it without realising the horror of it. We've all seen pictures of the men who suffered in Japanese prison camps; we've condemned the Japanese for their treatment of their prisoners. This film showed women and children as weak and emaciated as the men who crawled, more than ten years ago now, from the camps in which they'd been starved and neglected. But these pictures are of something that is happening now.

"There was a child—this I could not watch, I hate writing of it, but I did see a moment or two of it—so weak that he could not brush from his face the flies that were crawling over it in their thousands. Flies in his eyes, in his nose, in his mouth, his whole face a moving mass of flies. Horrible? Sickening? Disgusting? Not the sort of thing one should write about? Maybe: not the sort of thing that should happen, either. If I hadn't seen it I wouldn't have believed it. And the child with the distended, enormous stomach of beri-beri; the men and the women with arms and legs so thin that you could see not just the bone structure but the bones.



Pastor Nicholls, M.B.E., examining a child on the Warburton Reserve.



Flies! But too lethargic to bother.

"I have seen nothing more shocking, nothing more damning, than this film . . . The unsophisticated native can't do as much as we can with the land: he can only live on it and hunt on it. At least, he could: now he can't hunt because the game's been driven away, and we've taken over his waterholes. Without water what can he do but die? Why don't we do the honest thing and go out and shoot him if we don't want him to live? Why let him starve slowly to death? A woman, trying to catch a rabbit to feed her child, dies slowly, buried alive when the burrow caves in, because she's too weak to dig her way out.

"Three blind men—yes, blind—are sent under their own power to a mission station hundreds of miles away, where they'll be cared for. One of them is found, near death, and saved: the others? Dead, if they're lucky. Dead, all of them, if they're lucky: slowly and hideously dead, unless we can help them. Men, women, children, tiny babies—the babies that aborigines love as much as we love our babies—all dying by the slow agony of starvation, and the diseases that starvation brings with it before it kills".

But Mr. Murdoch states:

"All were obviously well-fed and happy".

DISEASED NATIVES

Mr. Murdoch:

"Not one really sick person did I see".

Matron Graham of the Warburton Range Mission in her Report published in the United Aborigines' "Messenger", February 1st, 1957:

"We have an average of 40 out-patients daily".

Perhaps the most fantastic of all Mr. Murdoch's mis-statements came when, after having said that he 'seen and spoken to' most of the natives on the reserve; 150 at Musgrave, 40 at Blackstone Range camp, 100 at Warburton, and 80 at Rawlinson Ranges, (370 in all) he said:

"I believe there is some incidence of trachoma among the natives, but I saw only two cases".

The Government Party, which included Professor Ida Mann, Consultant Ophthalmologist to the Department of Public Health, W.A. (described as an authority of world renown) stated in its report:

"Trachoma . . . was widespread throughout the area, some 77% of persons examined being affected".

Matron Graham's Report, United Aborigines' "Messenger", February 1st, 1957:

"Our most prevalent eye trouble is still by far trachoma, which IN SO MANY CASES HAS CAUSED BLINDNESS AMONGST THE NATIVES".

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TRACHOMA is described by Frank W. Law, Ophthalmological Surgeon, of Guy's Hospital, London, as Chronic Conjunctivitis.

The symptoms of trachoma are as follows:

Early stages—

PHOTOPHOBIA (acute sensitiveness to light. This causes the eyes to close up when out of doors).

ENLARGED FOLLICLES, which cause

LACRIMATION (the copious flowing of tears).

These symptoms are followed by A CONTINUAL DISCHARGE OF PUS FROM THE EYES.

Trachoma is an extremely painful disease which causes blindness.

IF WE ARE TO ACCEPT THE FINDINGS OF THE GOVERNMENT MEDICAL PARTY, APPROXIMATELY 280 OF THE NATIVES WHICH MR. MURDOCH 'SAW AND SPOKE TO' MUST HAVE BEEN SUFFERING FROM THIS EYE COMPLAINT, THE SYMPTOMS OF WHICH ARE UNMISTAKABLE.

Yet Mr. Murdoch said: "I saw only 2 cases". Further—
Mr. Murdoch stated:

"I saw no other diseases".

The Government Medical Report stated:

"Yaws was shown to be present in 25% of bloods so far examined for this disease".

YAWS is a chronic disease which manifests itself in the primary stages by sores which are to be seen chiefly on the wrists and ankles. These become more extensive, spreading over the arms and legs as the disease develops. They are followed by severe ulceration.

In the later and tertiary stages the flesh rots away leaving bony deformities.

IF THE GOVERNMENT MEDICAL REPORT IS RELIABLE AT LEAST 92 OF THE 370 NATIVES THAT MR. MURDOCH 'SAW AND SPOKE TO' MUST HAVE HAD YAWS !

It is interesting to note:

Hansard, (Commonwealth of Australia) May 9th, 1957:

That Mr. Rupert Murdoch is the person described by Mr. Beale, M.H.R., Minister for Supply, at the matter of urgency debate on the Warburton Range Aborigines, in Canberra, May 9th, 1957 as a 'responsible person'.

In their desperate efforts to "faze" the public by sheer weight of contradictions, denials and false statements; and by throwing up a smoke screen to cover up the true and hideous facts concerning the Warburton Range natives, Ministers of both the Federal Government, and of the Western Australian State Government, have used the mis-statements of this 'responsible person' to discredit the following Western Australian Parliamentarians:

Mr. W. L. GRAYDEN, M.L.A. (Independent Liberal).

Mr. S. E. LAPHAM, M.L.A. (Labour).

Mr. E. R. OLDFIELD, M.L.A. (Country Party Nominee).

Mr. J. J. RHATIGAN, M.L.A. (Labour).

Mr. STEWART BOVELL, M.L.A. (Liberal).

(The Members of the Select Committee appointed by the Western Australian Government to inquire into Native Welfare in the Warburton Range area, WHOSE REPORT WAS UNANIMOUS.

And also of:

PASTOR DOUG. NICHOLLS, M.B.E., the Aboriginal clergyman who accompanied the 2nd Expedition.

THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA HAVE SEEN THE FILM AND IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN VOCIFEROUS DENIALS, FALSE STATEMENTS, AND SUPPRESSION OF FACTS TO STEM THE RISING TORRENT OF PUBLIC INDIGNATION.