

Strikes, petitions and deputations: protest by Aboriginal workers at Point Pearce Station, 1941-1952

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Abstract

This paper looks at organised protest by Aboriginal workers at Point Pearce Station between 1941 and 1952, during which time William R. Penhall was the administrative head of the South Australian Aborigines Department.

It considers such protest against the background of four aspects of the engagement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people at the Station, and in the wider region, at the time.

Firstly, the almost feudal power relations that existed between officers of the Department and the Aboriginal residents of Point Pearce Station. Secondly, the extreme under-resourcing of the needs of those residents. Thirdly, the widespread exploitation of Aboriginal workers in the South Australian pastoral industry and the refusal of the South Australian government to address this legislatively, and fourthly, the Aboriginal experience of racism in South Australia.

Consideration will also be given to the aspirations that the Aboriginal residents of the Station had for the training and education of their children. In this regard, the hypocrisy and extreme lethargy of the Aborigines Department and its long-term Minister, Malcolm McIntosh, will be established.

Point Pearce Station has a long, proud history of dissent.

Point Pearce Station, on the Yorke Peninsula, has a long, proud history of protest and dissent. The first Aboriginal strike at the station occurred in 1901, over the lack of educational opportunities and the demand for the payment of wages, not rations, for labour. Another strike, in 1941, was held over the demand for award rates of pay for Aboriginal workers.

Petitions were organised at the station in 1894, 1901, 1910, 1926, 1929, 1941, 1942, 1945, 1946 and 1952. These petitions addressed various issues including wages, education, rations, the construction of a public hall, and returns from the sharefarming scheme in operation at the station.

Elsewhere in South Australia, for the same period, only one other Aboriginal strike attracted the attention of the Aborigines Department – at Poonindie in 1889. Various petitions were organised at Point McLeay Station in 1923, 1926 and 1936, on the Coorong in 1930, at Murray Bridge in 1940, and in Ceduna in 1945. Clearly, the residents of Point Pearce Station were at the forefront of organised Aboriginal protest in South Australia throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Internal and external conditions

In an attempt to understand Aboriginal protest at Point Pearce Station between 1941 and 1952, I will describe a set of conditions, created by the Aborigines Department and endemic to both Point Pearce and Point McLeay Stations, that made life almost unbearable at Point Pearce. I will describe another set of conditions which operated at the same time, and which made the possibility of a life lived elsewhere almost unimaginable.

The first are *internal conditions*, in that they belong to the inner workings of the Aborigines Department and their management of the stations. The second are *external conditions*, in that they belong to the general conditions confronting Aboriginal people in their interactions with the non-Aboriginal people of South Australia.

I will begin though, with a brief history of Point Pearce Station.

Brief history of Point Pearce Station

Point Pearce Station had its beginnings in 1866, when the non-Aboriginal inhabitants of the Yorke Peninsula employed a missionary to tend to the Aboriginal people of the area. The Point Pearce Mission was established two years later in 1868, and was controlled by a body made up chiefly of residents of the town of Moonta. A school was quickly established at the Mission. In these early years, there were approximately eighty Aboriginal people living at the Mission.

There appears to have been little unrest at the Mission until 1901, when there was a strike over the issues of wages and education. The strike was precipitated by the decision of the Mission Board to reduce the weekly wage for adult men from nine shillings per week to four shillings plus rations. After a fortnight without Aboriginal labour, the Board decided that if the strike were to continue into a third week, rations would be halved. The strikers and their families were to be starved into submission.

The strikers were unhappy with the education being offered to their children, and asked for the Mission school to be placed under the control of the Education Department. Eight years later, this request was complied with.

On 1 September 1915, on the recommendation of the 1913 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Affairs, the Point Pearce Mission was taken over by the South Australian government.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the administration of Aboriginal affairs in South Australia was characterised by a lack of serious planning, effort and resources. Aboriginal people steadily became more and more concerned with their social and economic plight. In August 1926, residents of the station submitted a list of questions to two Members of Parliament on their visit to the station. They were concerned about various things, including sharefarming arrangements and the condition of their houses. The questions were dismissed by the Chief Protector of Aborigines as

‘raised by irresponsible and individual aborigines’.¹ Over the next three years, two other Members of Parliament raised these same matters to no effect.²

In 1929, seventy-two Aboriginal men of the station signed a petition requesting the erection of a public hall at the Station, ‘for Religious, Educational and Amusement’ purposes. They offered to supply their labour free of charge. Seven years later, a hall was built. This echoes the experience of the 1901 strikers. Perhaps the Aborigines Department was at pains to not appear to cave in to Aboriginal demands, opting instead for a long lag between such demands and remedial action.

I will now turn to the period 1941 to 1952, and then outline the internal and external conditions which informed Aboriginal protest and dissent.

Strikes, petitions and deputations at Point Pearce Station, 1941-52

In September 1941, there was a strike by shedhands at Point Pearce Station, protesting at the failure of the Aborigines Department to pay them award rates. The manager of the station wrote to Penhall about the matter, naming the strikers.³

Around the same time, a petition signed by sixty-five male residents of the station was presented to C.S. Hincks, the local Member of Parliament, calling for (i) increased wages, (ii) a hospital on the Station, (iii) vegetables, fruit and butter to be included in the ration, and (iv) Aboriginal sharefarmers to receive one-third, not one-tenth, of their harvest returns. The Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board, W. R. Penhall, assured

¹ GRG 52/1/1926/37.

² The issue of sharefarming was taken up by Richards, in Parliament, in 1927. He argued that the quality of the land at Point Pearce was poor and that the area given them ‘totally inadequate’ for their maintenance. He said:

I cannot see the wisdom of allowing large sections of that station to be share-farmed by well-to-do farmers around whilst the blacks are lying around in huts doing nothing ... The whole area should be used for the express benefit of the blacks living there. [South Australia, House of Assembly 1927, Debates, vol.2, p.1856.]

In 1929, Sutton drew the attention of Parliament to ‘the deplorable conditions at Point Pearce Station, with its cottages ‘far too small for the one, two, or three families living in them’. [South Australia, House of Assembly 1929, Debates, vol.1, p.482.]

³ Castine to Penhall, 18 September 1941, GRG 52/1/1941/13 [p/c].

Hincks that the Department was working on, at least, the issues of hospital accommodation and rations.⁴

At a meeting of the Aborigines Protection Board, Penhall recommended an increase in the basic wage from five to six shillings per day, but argued against the share-farming increase. He also suggested that ‘adjustments’ be made to the ration scale.⁵ The adjustments were such that adults lost one and a half pounds of meat and two loaves of bread in lieu of an allowance of one shilling and sixpence for fruit and vegetables, whilst children lost one and a half pounds of meat and one loaf of bread in lieu of nine pence for fruit and vegetables. It is hard to imagine a more cynical and mean-spirited response to the issue of adequate rations. The aged and infirm were now to receive, on a weekly basis, groceries to the value of three shillings and eleven pence, fruit and vegetables to one shilling and six pence, three pounds of meat, three loaves of bread, and one pint of milk per day, per family.

Almost a year earlier, Dr Turner, of Tailem Bend, had written to Penhall describing as a ‘scandalous state of affairs’ the fact that rations at Point McLeay Station received only one pint of milk per day per family, and no provision for vegetables or fruit. He pointed to the lack of Aboriginal resistance ‘to any epidemic such as the measles’ as a measure of the seriousness of his complaint, and argued that children required one pint of milk each, per day.⁶

By contrast, the residents of Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station in Victoria received, on a weekly basis, *eight* pounds of flour, a quarter of a pound of tea, two pounds of sugar, *seven* pounds of meat, up to *seven* pounds of potatoes, and one pound of butter or two pounds of jam. In addition, there were issues of baking powder, coffee, oatmeal, peas, sago and thirteen other grocery items, with vegetables grown on the Station and issued in season, and fresh milk given out twice daily.⁷ It put the South Australian regime to shame.

⁴ Penhall to Hincks, 10 October 1941, GRG 52/1/1941/1B [p/c].

⁵ Penhall to the Aborigines Protection Board, 8 October 1941, GRG 52/1/1941/65.

⁶ Dr Turner to Penhall, 16 December 1940, GRG 52/1/1940/101.

⁷ Ronald Glen, Manager, Lake Tyers Aboriginal Station, to Penhall, 3 December 1940, GRG 52/1/1940/101, [p/c].

Then, in December 1945, the Minister in charge of the Aborigines Department, Malcolm McIntosh, visited Point Pearce Station along with other members of the Aborigines Protection Board. A deputation of Aboriginal residents was introduced to the group by Hincks. The deputation criticised the inadequate transport of patients to Wallaroo Hospital and the over-crowding and sub-standard housing on the station. They requested:

- (i) the provision of social security for Aboriginal people;
- (ii) financial assistance to Aboriginal fishermen;
- (iii) the appointment of an Aboriginal person to the Board;
- (iv) an increase in the sharefarming share;
- (v) vocational training for young Aboriginal people;
- (vi) the return of deceased Aboriginal people from Adelaide to the Station for burial;
- (vii) improvements to the ration scale;
- (viii) the appointment of a resident police officer; and
- (ix) the provision of electric lighting.⁸

The issue of vocational training for young Aboriginal people had remained of vital concern to residents of the station for nearly half a century, during which time nothing had been done. Unknown to the deputation, the previous year the Education Department had dismissed the problem of establishing a vocational training centre for young Aboriginal people as 'a very complex one'.⁹

Whilst he was at the station, Minister McIntosh requested of the head teacher of the station school that he interview each upper grade child and ascertain their desired occupation. Of the three male students, two wanted to be shearers, one an engineer. Of the eight female students, four wanted to be dressmakers, and one a nurse.¹⁰

In years to come, whenever the matter of Aboriginal education was raised in Parliament, McIntosh was to cite this most brief and inadequate of surveys as evidence that Aboriginal children did not want to go into the professions. The survey itself, such

⁸ GRG 52/1/1946/62; GRG 52/1/1944/52.

⁹ GRG 52/1/1944/60.

¹⁰ B.J. Grewar to Penhall, 17 December 1945, GRG 52/1/1946/62.

as it was, was never made public, for obvious reasons. If it was, it would have revealed McIntosh's dishonesty.

Throughout the period 1941-52, the station was left largely undeveloped and unimproved. Indeed, when A. H. Bray returned to the station in January 1946, after four years absence, he found the station to have retrogressed, and was especially disappointed that obsolete harvesting equipment was being used. He argued that the use of such equipment compromised the station's role as a trainer of Aboriginal farm labour. He hinted at a deeper malaise:

My impressions of my first visit to Point Pearce after approximately four years' absence were of general deterioration in every section of the Station ...¹¹

There was a pitiful lack of services at the station, of all kinds, including education, health and recreation. Though the officers built themselves a tennis court in 1933 with financial help from the Department, there was no provision of playground equipment for the children of the station until 1946.¹²

Aboriginal concerns with housing were also well-founded. An inspection of the station in October 1947 found that there were over four hundred residents in sixty-five small dwellings, twenty-five of these consisting of just two rooms. One Aboriginal man suffering from tuberculosis lived with his wife and five children in one of these two-roomed cottages. The health inspector found that scabies and ricketts were prevalent, and attributed the latter to the lack of vitamins in the diet.¹³

By January 1948, the list of grievances submitted to the Board in late 1945 had still not been attended to. The manager of the station refused to attend a meeting of Aboriginal residents in that month, but then met with a committee of three who added another eight complaints regarding things such as work, rations and health.¹⁴

In March 1948, the head-teacher at Point Pearce Station made his own complaint to Penhall. He pointed to a decline in the age at which children were leaving school, from

¹¹ GRG 52/1/1946/58.

¹² GRG 52/1/1946/58.

¹³ Inspector Kennedy, Report on Point Pearce Mission Station, 14 October 1947, GRG 52/1/1947/1C.

¹⁴ Walloscheck to Penhall, 17 January 1948, GRG 52/1/1948/1.

fifteen and a half in 1944, to fourteen and two-thirds in 1947, and warned that worse was to come. He wrote:

With an enrolment of well over a hundred pupils, and even more in prospect, it should be obvious that two teachers, one of whom is untrained, cannot provide effective instruction for all pupils. It is my duty to convey to you my considered opinion that if the present understaffing, which has already existed for many months, is long continued, little hope exists of a worthwhile improvement in the educational standards of these children. Rather is there likely to be a disastrous decline.¹⁵

Over the next few years, this teacher was to find himself marginalised and sidelined by the staff of the Aborigines Department, until his position at the station became untenable and he resigned. Of course, the children of the white staff of the station were taken to Port Victoria on the mail cart each day for their schooling.¹⁶

By 1952, still nothing had been done regarding the training of Aboriginal youth past school age. In his annual report of that year, Penhall justified this lack of action with the assertion that not many of them were interested in trades such as building, carpentry and plumbing.¹⁷

Then, in June 1952, over seventy residents of the station signed a petition calling for wages to be increased to seven pounds per week, amongst other things. Penhall recommended to his Board that matters of employment and rates of pay be left to the discretion of himself and the managers of the stations. The Board acquiesced.

Central amongst the internal conditions at Point Pearce Station which kindled the spark of Aboriginal protest that I have described were low wages, and poor rations and services. Also important in this respect were the power relations that existed on the station. I now turn to this aspect of the internal conditions.

Internal conditions – power relations

A. H. Bray commenced work at Point Pearce Station in 1928, and was the manager of the station from at least 1932 to 1942, when he was called up for war duties as a Man Power

¹⁵ Porter to Penhall, 11 March 1948, GRG 52/1/1948/1a.

¹⁶ GRG 52/1/1949/1a.

¹⁷ Annual Report 1952, GRG 52/1/1952/69.

officer.¹⁸ An ex-soldier himself, he presided over a regime at Point Pearce Station which emphasised obedience and discipline to the Aborigines Department. Almost every aspect of life on the station was ordered to some degree. There was even a regulation under the Act which prohibited residents from playing any games on the station streets without the permission of the manager.

Bray used a variety of methods to control Aboriginal people on the station. At least one of these methods was of questionable legality. In November 1939, Penhall confided to Chinnery, the Director of Native Affairs in Darwin, that irregular methods were used to discipline the residents of the Station. He wrote:

At Point Pearce the Superintendent inflicts punishment on working natives guilty of minor offences, by fining them small sums. This practice has no regulation to support it.¹⁹

Anyone who spoke up against Bray or the Aborigines Department was threatened with expulsion from the station. On consecutive days in May 1940, Bray had two men expelled from the station for the reason of them being ‘agitators’.²⁰ Under the regulations of the Act, the Board could expel any person whose presence on the Station was regarded as inimical to the maintenance of discipline and good order. No specific offence needed to be committed before such action was taken. There would be no charge, no court action, and no redress for the Aboriginal person concerned.²¹ Workers could be, and were, fined or expelled for insubordination. The requirement on Aboriginal residents was to be subordinate; to defer to the needs of the Aborigines Department.

The combined effect of these conditions was to make life very difficult on both government stations. In 1955, two years after Penhall retired, a young Don Dunstan weighed into the debate. He compared Point Pearce Station to the English ‘workhouses’ for the poor, and argued:

They are deliberately kept at their present standard of development at Point Pearce in order to try to edge them out.²²

¹⁸ GRG 52/1/1946/73a.

¹⁹ Penhall to Chinnery, 8 November 1939, GRG 52/8 [p/c].

²⁰ GRG 52/1/1940/64.

²¹ Penhall to Walloscheck, 11 May 1949, GRG 52/1/1949/65.

²² South Australia, House of Assembly 1955, Debates, vol.2, p.1318.

External conditions

Why, then, did Aboriginal people remain at the station? Firstly, and most obviously, for many residents it was the place of their birth and that of their parents and grandparents. There was, and still is, a strong connection to the Point Pearce land.

There is another set of conditions which made the possibility of a life lived elsewhere almost impossible. I have referred to them as external conditions. They are:

- (i) the lack of regulation of Aboriginal pastoral workers and, more importantly, their employers, which allowed gross violations of the rights of Aboriginal workers in South Australia;
- (ii) the miserly rationing regime that held away from the government stations, which saw Aboriginal rations receive nothing more than flour, sugar and tea, and one blanket per year, and this controlled largely by police officers and station owners;
- (iii) the absence of unemployment benefits for Aboriginal people; and
- (iv) the widespread racism that existed throughout rural South Australia at the time, which resulted in Aboriginal children being unwelcome in various public schools, including those at Iron Knob and Ceduna.

These factors acted as a strong disincentive for Aboriginal people to leave Point Pearce Station and take up work elsewhere. This was recognised as early as 1936, when Pattinson, the Member for York Peninsula, noted that ‘while they are not compelled to stay on the mission stations they have no chance to go elsewhere’.²³

²³ South Australia, House of Assembly 1936, Debates, vol.2, p.2418.

Notes for Stolen Wages Inquiry, 16 November 2006

In my original submission to the Inquiry, I wrote to four topics.

The first was the approximate number of Aboriginal workers in South Australia whose paid labour was controlled by the South Australian government.

I indicated that in South Australia, the only Aboriginal people so affected were those who worked on the government stations, Point Pearce and Point McLeay. I suggested there were between 400 and 800 such workers. I wasn't sure if archival records existed which could help determine this number. I can now say that there are five groups of records which may shed light on this issue, and I can supply the Inquiry with notes on these if required.

Extra Notes:

GRG 52/53, Point Pearce and Point McLeay Stations, Wages Book.

For the period 1927–1943, records the total cost of wages on a weekly basis. Workers not named.

GRG 52/55, Point McLeay Station, List of persons employed. For the period 1940–1943, records the number of days worked by each, named Aboriginal person at the station.

GRG 52/65, Point Pearce Station, Wages Book. Records, for the period 1932–39, days worked by each, named Aboriginal worker.

GRG 52/71, Point Pearce Station, Time Book. Records, for the period 1957–1964, days worked by each, named Aboriginal worker.

GRG 52/86, Point McLeay Station, Wages Sheet. Records, for the period 1951–53, work done and wages paid to each, named Aboriginal worker.

I also mentioned in my submission that there was much discontent among the Aboriginal residents of these two stations with work and living conditions. I can also supply the Inquiry with more information on this point if required.

Extra Notes:

I have written of organised protest by Aboriginal workers at Point Pearce Station between 1941 and 1952. I can make this paper available if required. In it I document the five petitions and one strike that occurred at the station in this twelve year period.

The gist of my paper is that the South Australian Aborigines Department made living and working conditions at the station deliberately hard in order to encourage people to leave the station. Aboriginal people were caught in a bind as their labour was generally exploited outside the station and their children were generally made unwelcome in public schools in South Australia at the time.

The second topic was the trust funds held by the South Australian government.

The Aborigines Department operated trust accounts on behalf of those Aboriginal people they considered were incapable of looking after their own financial affairs.

By 1953 there were forty-five Aboriginal trust funds operated by the Aborigines Department, containing £2,375. These individual accounts were consolidated into one account, known as 'Trust Fund—Aborigines Protection Board'. This information is contained in the archival record GRG 52/1/1953/114.

During my research into the Aborigines Department in South Australia, I made brief notes regarding thirteen trust funds mentioned in the archives. I can make this information available to the Inquiry.

Extra Notes:

Penhall opens an account 'The APB Jimmie James Fund' to provide for the children of Jimmie James, 27 August 1947. GRG 52/1/1947/78

Edgar Lampard Trust Fund account. Last letter on file, of 26 March 1952, shows £22/-6/-8 remains in the account. GRG 52/1/1948/83

Harry Lampard advised, 29 October 1954, that he has £256/-16/-5 in his trust account. GRG 52/1/1948/84

Miscellaneous account opened—the Gordon Sansbury Fund. GRG 52/1/1948/73

£33/-2/-5 being held for Henry George, from Queensland. GRG 52/1/1948/89

Trust fund for Mrs Winnie Coulthard. GRG 52/1/1951/44.

Penhall to Chief Clerk, Savings Bank, SA, 8 February 1951, opening account 'The Aborigines Protection Board, Patrick Merle Milera Fund'. GRG 52/1/1951/67

Secretary Bartlett to Deputy Commissioner, Repatriation Commission, 15 March 1954, that account M19043 on behalf of P.M. Milera opened with Savings Bank of S.A. GRG 52/1/1951/67

Penhall to Gratuity Officer, Keswick Barracks, 18 July 1949, recommending that the £29/-5/- gratuity due to recently widowed Roma Jackson and her two children should be administered by the Department. GRG 52/1/1951/76

Penhall to Chief Clerk, Savings Bank SA, 21 March 1951, opening account 'The APB – B. Jackson Gratuity Fund'. GRG 52/1/1951/76
Trust fund, Steve Lumkin. GRG 52/1/1951/80?
Trust fund, Topsy Parker. GRG 52/1/1951/83
Trust fund, Maudie Rowlands. GRG 52/1/1951/84
Ben Richards Trust fund. GRG 52/1/1951/101
Walter Mansell Tripp Benefit Fund. GRG 52/1/1953/88.

The third topic was maternity allowance and child endowment in South Australia. In my submission I noted that the Aborigines Department controlled the child endowment of certain Aboriginal people. They did this where they thought that doing so would allow them some measure of control over the payee. I also mentioned irregularities in the child endowment regimes at Koonibba Mission and the UAM's childrens homes.

As I indicated, I can provide more detail on the following issues if required:

1. Aboriginal women were required to pay their maternity allowance to the hospital in which their baby was delivered

Extra Notes:

The Secretary of the Aborigines Department in South Australia, William R Penhall, had an arrangement with the Queen Victoria Hospital under which Aboriginal patients were required to pay a flat rate of £7/10, which covered all their maternity costs.¹ It is clear that this was expected to come from their maternity allowance but I'm not sure of the mechanism employed to ensure that the money went to the Hospital.

2. The Aborigines Department used child endowment money as a means of controlling Aboriginal people

Extra Notes:

Quite a number of Aboriginal people in South Australia had their child endowment administered by the Aborigines Department. I have some examples of the head of the Department (W. R. Penhall) withholding child endowment in order to control the behaviour of the recipients.

¹ Penhall to Secretary Quorn District Memorial Hospital, 12/8/1952, GRG 52/1/1952/30.

As an example, the missionary-in-charge of the Finnis Springs Mission suggested to Penhall that he intervene in the case of a young Aboriginal woman who refused to do domestic chores. He suggested to Penhall that he withhold her £2 monthly payment. Penhall did as he asked. He had no authority to do so.²

In fact, in 1941, Penhall requested that officers-in-charge of police stations throughout South Australia send all applications from Aboriginal people for child endowment to him, so that he could vet them before sending them to the Commonwealth Department of Social Security.³ Penhall made arrangements with them for his department to 'receive payment on the endowee's behalf' in certain cases.⁴

3. The staff of the Koonibba Mission withheld child endowment money with the knowledge of the South Australian government

Extra Notes:

I have several examples of the staff of Koonibba Mission withholding child endowment money with the knowledge of the South Australian government.

In June 1944, Penhall was advised that an Aboriginal woman with children at Wudinna could not pay her rent because her child endowment was not being sent on from Koonibba Mission.⁵ Instead of asking the Koonibba authorities to send her the money they were collecting on her behalf, and *illegally* withholding from her, Penhall instead requested of the Wudinna police that they 'bring pressure to bear upon' her to return immediately to the mission.⁶

By June 1944, there were forty-six children in the Koonibba Home.⁷ There were financial imperatives behind keeping Aboriginal children in the Home. When the missionary-in-charge, Pastor Traeger, found out that three Aboriginal families receiving large child endowment cheques were leaving Koonibba, he staged a concerted attempt to disrupt their plans. When Traeger subsequently required hospital care, at least one large family took the opportunity to escape the Mission.

² Penhall to Pearce, 25 October 1946, GRG 52/1/1946/18.

³ See e.g. Penhall to Officer-in-Charge, Port Augusta Police Station, 29/7/1941, GRG 52/1/1941/27.

⁴ Penhall to Commissioner of Public Works, 26 July 1941, GRG 52/1/1941/27.

⁵ McKenzie to Secretary, Aborigines Protection Board, re Wudinna, 16 June 1944, GRG 52/1/1944/33.

⁶ Penhall to OIC, Wudinna Police Station, 30 June 1944, GRG 52/1/1944/33.

⁷ Traeger to Penhall, 13 July 1944, GRG 52/1/1944/59, Annual Report.

4. The United Aborigines Mission did not spend child endowment appropriately

Extra Notes:

Investigations into the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) by the Department for Social Security in the early 1950s showed that the UAM had failed to keep detailed records of their spending of child endowment. Also, the child endowment money from their Childrens Homes at Ooldea, Finnis Springs, Nepabunna, Oodnadatta, Colebrook and Gerard had been pooled, with the result that there was no way of knowing whether any of the child endowment due to the children at, say, Ooldea, had actually been spent on them.⁸

There were also cases of overpayment of child endowment to the UAM through the same child being registered under different surnames at different Homes⁹ and payments being received by the UAM for years after a child had left one of their Homes¹⁰.

There were also cases of the UAM receiving payments for children even when those children were living with their parents on a Mission, as a family unit. The Director of Social Security argued that, in such cases, the endowment should be paid to the mother, not the UAM.¹¹ He also found that where the Mission did pass on the endowment, they generally short-changed the payee.¹²

Such were the irregularities that, for a time, the Aborigines Department acted as an intermediary between the Social Security Department and the UAM. Substantial sums of money were involved. For the 12-week period from December 1950 to March 1951, the UAM's claim for child endowment was over £1,623.¹³

The fourth topic of my original submission was access to records by Aboriginal people in South Australia. I gave the context behind the South Australian Attorney-General imposing a virtual blanket ban on the most important record group relating to Aboriginal people in South Australia, GRG 52/1. This was done in 2004 and, the last time I checked, in early 2006, restrictions to access were still in place that make this rich record group virtually useless.

⁸ L. Kempson, Dir. Social Security, to Penhall, 27/2/51, GRG 52/1/1951/72.

⁹ L.W. Loveless, A/g Dir. Social Security to Samuels, 11/4/51, GRG 52/1/1951/72.

¹⁰ E.E. White to Penhall, 20/3/51, GRG 52/1/1951/72.

¹¹ Loveless, Dir. Social Security, to Samuels, 18/8/52, GRG 52/1/1951/72.

¹² Loveless, Dir. Social Security, to Samuels, 18/8/52, GRG 52/1/1951/72.

¹³ Penhall to Dep. Dir. Social Security Department, 5/3/51, GRG 52/1/1951/72.