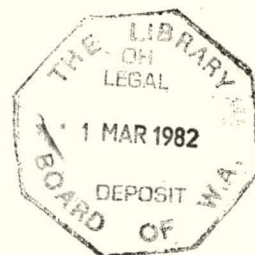


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Oral History Programme



an interview with

DON McLEOD

15 November 1978

ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS IN THE NORTH WEST

Conducted by

Chris Jeffery
Oral History Officer

Reference number OH331
Verbatim transcript
(1 x 90, 1 x 60 tapes)



NOTE TO READER

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VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

This is an interview with Mr Don McLeod, recorded by Chris Jeffery on the 15th of November, 1978, for the Battye Library Oral History Programme. Mr McLeod spoke of his life in the Kimberleys and the North West generally, where he has spent a great many years working on behalf of the natives. With them he has been involved in the mining and pastoral industries and is very involved in the Aboriginal land rights, as well as with educational facilities for natives at Strelley Station.

DM. I Donald William McLeod give permission for any information and material given by me to be used by the Battye Library as they see fit. I'm Donald William McLeod, born on the 8th of May, 1908, at Meekatharra. [I am the son of] William Henry McLeod and Anna McLeod.

CJ. How many were there in the family?

DM. There were eight in our family. There were really nine, the eldest son died when he was three, he got drowned in a dam; but eight others, but there's two or three of them died now. There were originally eight of us.

CJ. What was your father doing in Meekatharra?

DM. He was the owner of the Queen of the Hills Gold Mine.

CJ. Queen of the Hills?

DM. Mmm.

CJ. Where did you go to school?

DM. Well we come down to Geraldton from Meekatharra, when Dad sold out of the Queen of Hills and since he was keen to get a good education for his family and believing that the Roman Catholics had the best schools, seven of us were put into the Roman....Stella Maris Convent in Geraldton.

CJ. How long were you there?

DM. Six years. It wasn't a very happy experience. I think the less said about it the better.

CJ. Well what age were you when you left school?

DM. Well I left, when I got my Dad's ear, I was quickly out of the convent and an aunt of mine, Jessie Morrison....

CJ. Got your bad year?

DM. Umm?

CJ. Got your bad year?

DM. When we left the convent when I was ten an aunt of ours Jessie Morrison, my mother's sister, looked after us and we attended the State school in Geraldton. I never got my Junior, I left the school, I would have sat for my Junior that year, but I was persuaded to leave to....I was told that I had a job as fitter and turner in Midland Junction, but in fact I didn't have a job there. There was three hundred applicants for seventeen jobs and there were thirty of us left when I was fired out, I wasn't tall enough. I was only four foot eleven and a half, and I had to be five foot, so I never got the job. But having boasted that I had a job in Midland Junction I was too proud to go back to school again and I shot off in the bush, and I've been in the bush ever since.

CJ. Where did you go?

DM. Oh I went back to the North.

CJ. And what work did you do up there?

DM. Oh everything, mining, contracting, well boring; all the things that you do in the North.

CJ. This would be in the 1920's?

DM. Yes.

CJ. How did the Depression affect you?

DM. Oh I was in gold mining, of course gold mining wasn't a depressed industry. When things are tough, gold comes into its own, so that I was able to give quite a few people a start during the depressions years, we started off a lot of people. Coming up from Perth, thrown off their properties and other things. We'd give them a few tools and put them onto some gold.

CJ. What town was this?

DM. Oh there was no town, just in the various mining districts.

CJ. I see. What the northern ones, the Murchison.

DM. Yes, Murchison.

CJ. Not the Kalgoorlie area?

DM. No.

CJ. Yes, yes. And what happened then, so you worked there during the twenties and thirties, round the mining districts, well sinking....

DM. Yes. Well I was going to go.... My dad and I decided to go North, he was in the Ashburton rush in the turn of the century and he had a few leaders¹ and other things there that he thought were worth having a look at again. We were going to go up back on the Ashburton in 1932/33 and he took a truck up and I was going to get a boat and take it up and meet him up there, because there was some things we wanted to have a look at on the coast. But unfortunately I never met him, he took a mate up with him, to Ashburton and they cut their tyres to pieces in the Capricorn Ranges, he wasn't a very good truck driver and the Ranges were very rough. His mate went down to get some more tyres and he walked out in various places to have a look at different things while he was there till his mate come back,

¹ Leader is a goldmining term for a cross-reef.

and he had a thrombosis and died, at a creek at a place called Top Camp. And it was five days before they found him, he'd been out forty miles that day and he was only two hundred yards off his camp, run down a creek, never got on his feet again, fell down and he was paralysed down one side and just couldn't get up, never reached his camp. Tried to give my sister a Power of Attorney, but he couldn't write with his right hand and he tried to write with his left hand, but it was illegible and that was the end of him. So of course when I took the boat up north but there was no point in it, because he was dead then. So I sold the boat and went back prospecting again.

CJ. In the Murchison area?

DM. In the Ashburton.

CJ. Yes, mmm.

DM. And while I was there I was working at a place called Silver Sheen on Meilga Station, producing chrysotile, a particularly good quality white asbestos. This is the time when Hitler was building up his war machine for his Blitzkrieg on Europe and this particular material that I was building was very useful in the war industry, in that you could make generators and starter motors much lighter than normal because the insulation, the asbestos insulation was much more efficient than anything they had at the time and I was able to get double the price from Hitler than I could on the world market, so I used to sell my stuff to Germany. I had arrangements through Hales Brokerage in London. Money was controlled coming out of Germany, they had a very tight monetary system. You couldn't get cash out. So what they used to do, they'd put the stuff in Hamburg on bond and then they'd have to build up enough money in exports until they got enough

credits in London to cover the material and then they'd clear it and they'd take it over. Well there was a crowd in Cleckheaton, Yorkshire, British Building and Asbestos Limited, they were keen to get into the fine yarn trade, which is in the asbestos industry where all the money was and they were trying to buy my stuff and Hales Brokerage wouldn't sell it, because they wouldn't pay the price. We could get a better price from Germany. So Alec Fenton, him and his brother owned British Building and Asbestos, come out to meet me to make a deal with me over this material and I become an attorney for their company in due course in Australia and they undertook to take all my stuff for the same price I was getting from Hitler's Germany. And they had other interests here and I was acting as their attorney looking after them here.

CJ. What year were you selling this to Germany?

DM. 1934/1937.

CJ. Ah yes, before the war.

DM. Just before the war broke out in 1939. Well I run into difficulties with the Roads' Board in the Ashburton, like all squatters, of course, they hated mining. These towns were run by little cabals, which was generally one of the dominant squatters who run the town at Onslow, Port Hedland, Marble Bar, Nullagine. There was a cabal operating on each of these places and Forrest interests, of course, run Onslow, and I clashed with Mervyn Forrest. No need to go into details now, but the result of it, I closed the mine down and went up onto the Pilbara.

CJ. Still looking for the same type of ore?

DM. Oh well we were still working, yes, I was still working for British Building and Asbestos, but the war was, it was getting [close] this was 1937/38, getting on towards the war, with the

result that we were just ready to, we'd opened up some mines, just ready to produce, in 1939 and we couldn't get shipping space, so we had to close down. So that was that.

CJ. Was this run as a company?

DM. No it was just that I was acting privately at that time.

CJ. You were just doing it yourself; did you have other people working for you?

DM. Oh yes I had....I've always had twenty or thirty men working for me all the time.

CJ. So then on the eve of war this was closed down?

DM. Yes.

CJ. What did you do then?

DM. Oh well I had to do other things. Of course by this time I could see, of course, that... While Fenton was in my camp, he challenged me about the way we were treating our black fellows. He reckoned that they were more able people than we seemed to think and that we could make better use of them. Well I didn't know that there was a native problem in those days. This would be when he come out about 1934/35, something like that.

CJ. What was his name?

DM. Alec Fenton. And he was picked up by a fellow named Griffiths who was working in the Taxation Department, he was going to make his money out of mining and of course he run him all over the place trying to get him interested in investing in asbestos, in other places where I wasn't. And Alec was no fool he let him run him round till he got short of dough or got sick of it and he come down to Perth and contacted my agent and come up to see me. And he said that while Griffiths was running him round he met a bloke at Roy Hill who reminded him of his grandfather,

except that he was a bit better looking than his grandfather. And he said, "He was a real old patriarch and he had a very good brain and he said, " I think they are capable of doing much better work than you're putting them to and I think you should treat them better."

CJ. Was this McKay at Roy Hill?

DM. No a fellow named Jim Smith was the manager.

CJ. Oh the manager.

DM. McKay had established Roy Hill, as a matter of fact he got his money to establish Roy Hill by selling the surplus black boys to the master pearlers for thirty pound a head. That's how Roy Hill was established in the first place. Master pearlers used to buy them for thirty pound a head and the police used to run them down in chains for the master pearlers on the station.

CJ. Women?

DM. Yes men and women.

CJ. Men and....When was this, this would be old McKay?

DM. Be the turn of the century, "Bunga" McKay they called him, "Bunga", big guts.

CJ. "Bunga" .

DM. "Bunga", Big Guts McKay. Anyhow I said, "Well.... they were, you know, the black fellows like living in the open and the squatters fed them and they'd be a charge on the State if they didn't feed them. The normal things that people used to say about black fellows. But they knew no better. Well you can imagine I knew nothing about the problem at all. Now the bloke who owned Meilga Station, that I was working on, a chap named Bill Peak....

CJ. Bill?

DM. Bill Peak. Used to be a tram conductor from Melbourne, and was a blacksmith by trade. And he was slinging off at me about these black fellows. He reckoned they used to look after me like a king. Every time....I used to pick up my mail there he used to come....we had a mail service on the Ashburton, we'd have to pick up our mail at the river, eight miles down and he'd pick up my mail sometimes I'd get his mail sometimes. And he reckoned that every time I come there they'd give me a Christmas pudding or something else, the women looked after me like as if I was, you know, a valued relation. And I couldn't see any difference there, that there was any reason why they'd give me any special treatment. But having regard to what Alec Fenton said and these comments I started to look around and it appears that I'd run ^{one} of these blokes into hospital when he was crook and saved his life. He had a heart attack and I'd run him into hospital and I think, apparently this was the reason that they were looking after me, because they reckoned that I had a bit of sentiment or something, which apparently was unusual in those days. Anyhow having had my attention drawn to them I become, I got to know them a bit and they approached me and finally when they got to know me better and they asked me what they could do to get out of the mess that they were in. And I said, "What mess is that?" And they said, "Well we can't leave our work, we're tied here, we don't get any wages for what we're doing and we can't leave. If we run away the policemen bring us back, and this is our country and yet we got to work here for this bloke. How did that come about?" I said, "I don't know, but I'll find out." So when I come down to Perth I made a search of the records and I found that they had a very sound case that we were steadily robbing them,

deliberately robbing them and that they had a tremendous case and well if we were to make a just solution to the problem they'd be the most prosperous people in the country because in addition to what they could earn by their own labour they're entitled to one per cent of the gross revenue, paid into a fund beyond the reach of Parliament, for their welfare. This was supposed to be used to feed and to educate them quickly so that they would be accepted as equal citizens. To feed and clothe them, they'd be otherwise destitute, and for their wellbeing and preservation. We got our....

CJ. Where did you get that information from?

DM. I got it out of the Constitution.² We had, we got our Constitution in 1889, at a price we never intended to pay. And till we agreed to embed the 70th section in our Constitution they weren't prepared to give us a constitution and they sparred and hung off and played around generally, trying to avoid embedding the 70th section in the Constitution, but they couldn't get out of it.

CJ. Embedding?

DM. Embedding, it had to be, it was an entrenched provision. Unless we embeded the 70th section of the Constitution we wouldn't have a constitution. It was made clear that that was the price of getting sovereign power, unless we give the black fellows their money, paid beyond the reach of Parliament, not to be fiddled round with a minister, well then that was it. So on finding they couldn't get rid of it, in 1889 we accepted a constitution with the 70th section in. The ink wasn't dry on the document before they whipped the 70th section out. And it was such a blatant breach of faith that it failed to get the Queen's consent and it lapsed and from that moment

2 Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council, 1889.

there arose the so called native question³. They were obviously they were going to, you know, prevent these black fellows from robbing them. They saw the money that they had to pay out beyond the reach of Parliament as their money and you see [Western] Australia was settled as a free colony, it wasn't a convict settlement the same as they settled the Eastern States, it was free settlers. Now the second sons of the landed gentry in England sent their.... The eldest sons stayed home to inherit the title and the second sons were sent out to the colonies to make their fortune. And they were given tracts of land, the labour of the black fellows and they found the black fellows weren't keen to work on their own country to make somebody else rich, they had a lot of difficulty. And the native question was well established before we got sovereign powers in 1889. And this was so bad, the reputation of Western Australia was so bad, they, in fact they got convicts out, when they found they couldn't make the black fellows work they got convicts out for a while and they found....

CJ. In 1850.

DM. Yes, they found that the Imperial Government had to feed these convicts and feed the gaolers and whatever to look after them, the soldiers, and this was a....they were using this as a market for their produce that they could sell. So that they were establishing Western Australia at the cost of the Imperial Government 's military establishment and of course this was their market. But they found that even this wasn't enough, it was costing more than it was worth. You know the British Government was still getting sick of it and they stopped sending convicts out after a while because it was too much of a drain on the Imperial Treasury.

CJ. They stopped in 1868

DM. That's right.....

3 See Submission to the Land Rights Council Meeting, Jameson, WA, 1978. Q333.1

CJ.after about ten thousand.

DM. So by 1889 the local johnnies had been....they'd got so confident and sufficiently arrogant to want, they reckoned the people in Downing Street didn't know what they were talking about, we were the only ones that knew, thirty thousand mile away, they're trying to tell us what to do and who the hell do they think they are and all this sort of thing. With the result that they wanted sovereign powers. Well the Imperial Government insisted that if they wanted sovereign powers they had to give compensation to black fellows and before they get the sovereign powers they had to embed the 70th section in the Constitution. And they whipped it out, as I say, before the ink was dry and it failed to get the Queen's consent and lapsed. So then we had a situation which, until 1897, they did put one per cent of gross revenue, they set up an Aboriginal Protection Board and they had a Protector. He was responsible to the Governor, not to Parliament and in fact the Parliament tried to have a look at their figures, they wanted to see just how the money was being spent and other things and he said well he didn't have to do that, because he was responsible to the Governor, not to Parliament. But it was agreed later on that Parliament could have a look at the figures because he was keeping a tally of them and nevertheless they were making, they were making things as difficult for him as they could, because after all it was only about.... it's still only twelve thousand a year, I think, even in '97, it wasn't a lot of money, but then they reckoned they wasted this money, they weren't looking after the black fellows and John Forrest and the rest of the politicians, they, well they'd bring up incidents you know, about so and so's crook down here at Pinjarra, or somewhere,

and now what did you do about him; you did nothing. And so and so is crook somewhere else. You know they're just criticising this bloke all the time.

CJ. When you say 'they', you're talking about the North West pastoralists?

DM. No I'm talking about the Government, Cabinet and the North West pastoralists too. But before the North West pastoralists come into the picture, we had the South West pastoralists too. My uncle, my grandmother's uncle, John Taylor, was one of the first squatters at Youndeggin, which is out near York. And they had the same proposition, they had the black fellows land and of course they also brought over a lot of labour of their own, they brought out, well as much money as they, depending how much they money they had and materials, they brought out labourers who were tied to them, you know, they had to work for them. And the wages were very meagre, I remember my grandmother saying that the house girls used to get five pounds a year. A shepherd, looking after five hundred sheep; they'd take them out after shearing, they'd have five hundred sheep in the bush for twelve months and bring them back with their tails cut ready for next shearing. That was worth eight pound a year and rations. Girls got five pound a year in the house, those were the wages they....

CJ. This was round the York area?

DM. This was round York area, yes. Not only York area, but everywhere, up to Geraldton and all over. And then when the North West opened of course the same thing applied in the North. Well I was approached by these fellows and what could they do? And I said, "Oh well, you've got a good case. All you've got to do is organise yourselves and it's an open and shut case. I can't see that you can lose."

CJ. What year was this?

DM. Oh be 1936 I suppose. So they said, "Alright, well if we can prove that we can organise the State, will you show us what to do?" And I said...well anybody who'd think to interfere with the squatters' slaves, they were only slaves of course, by that time, because the 70th section was taken out of the constitution in 1897, I think it's important to put that one in. Sir John Forrest...whilst Lord Knutsford was Secretary of State for Colonies, he insisted that the conditions under 70th section were observed. But now when he was replaced by Joseph Chamberlain, he wasn't so insistent and John Forrest apparently found a, you know....

CJ. Loophole?

DM. Well he found that he had an accord with this bloke and he went home to England in 1897 and he made a deal with Joe Chamberlain, on condition that they got the Queen's consent they....what do you call it when you proclaim, that they'd got the Queen's consent. So long as they did this within two years of having taken the 70th section out, they could take the 70th section out of the Constitution. There's no compensation to go to the black fellows except they had to pay five thousand a year, I think it was, or any other sum that they cared to pay for the black fellows. And they could take the 70th section out. Now I wasn't aware how this happened. I knew that the 70th section was taken out in 1897, but how it was taken out I never found out until I went to England last year, and they'd placed it.... a document was tabled in the House of Commons, for the information of the Members, so they could debate the problem. You've got a copy of this in your place, I think it's called the correspondence

relating to the removal of the 70th section something to that effect. It's a book of about a hundred and sixty pages and it's all the official correspondence and everything was in it. And it was put on the table of the House of Commons, in preparation for a debate. When John Forrest saw Chamberlain, they never debated the thing, it was quietly taken away and even in the House of Commons, they didn't know what had happened. And a fellow from Yorkshire or somewhere up that way asked a question in the House and Chamberlain said, "Yes, well that's alright." [Pause]

CJ. Hogan?

DM. Yes.

"I asked the Secretary of State for Colonies whether the long standing difficulty with the Government of Western Australia, in reference to the control and management of aborigines of that colony has been satisfactorily adjusted and if so whether there is any objection to stating the terms of the settlement."

Mr Joe Chamberlain, Joe Chamberlain.

"The difficulty has been adjusted satisfactorily The Colonial Government and Parliament have agreed to create a special government department to look after the interests of the natives and to superintend the distribution of funds provided for their relief." ⁴

Now they never give them any compensation, they just slipped it out, they let them take the 70th section out of the Constitution and that was that.

CJ. What's that document?

DM. Well that's a copy of the Hansard in Great Britain. You've got nothing in your archives about it, but that's a copy of the Hansard of that date.

CJ. Oh the Proceedings of the House of Commons.

DM. House of Commons, yes.

4 Ibid, Appendix II.

CJ. Yes, 1890, August, 1897, I see.

DM. Well as far as they were concerned the situation was right, but you must remember that the Commonwealth had come into existence about this time. I think the initial conference that was held in regard to the Commonwealth, was in Adelaide, in '97. Well now having got control of the native question so called, they weren't going to let it slip out of the hands of the Commonwealth. In 1897 they forced the Commonwealth Government to undertake, to put in their constitution that they had no right to make laws about black fellows, because particularly Queensland and Western Australia, they weren't going to lose this rich preserve they'd just got their fingers onto. So they wouldn't be in the Commonwealth unless the Commonwealth embeded in their constitution the fact that they had no powers to pass laws about black fellows and having got that and the railway and other things, well of course they come into the....But because it was a very delicate subject they failed to proclaim that they'd got the Queen's consent to this taking the 70th section out of the Constitution in 1897 because they didn't want to wake up any babies. They didn't want to, it's always been a hot potato this one, so because they didn't want to stir any public controversy, they just failed to proclaim it, they were going to do it, but forgot all about it. And it wasn't till 1905 they realised that they were still in the blue, so in 1905 they passed an enabling bill, they went through the whole rigmarole again, they took the 70th section out again, they passed an enabling bill making legal, all the illegal things that had happened since 1897, and they dispossessed the black fellows utterly. And this is the brief history of the native question of Western Australia, they were deliberately robbed by the people who had first of all got control of their estate on condition that they'd educate them

quickly so they're accepted as equal citizens, to feed and clothe them; they would be otherwise destitute, and for their well being and preservation. And having got them on those conditions, kept them illiterate, isolated and destitute so that they'd never find out what was going on, so that they could more easily be robbed. And that is the history of the native question in Western Australia, it's as simple as that.

CJ. And what were you able to do for them at that time in 1936?

DM. Well they wanted to know what to do and I said, well they couldn't do anything unless they organised the whole State. And they said, "Well if we organise the whole State will you show us what to do. Will you, you know, act as our adviser, and will you get control of this fund?" And I said, "Yes if you can guarantee that you can organise the whole State I'll certainly show you what to do," because I didn't think they could do it, I thought it was too big a job for them. Because any man that pokes his nose into what the squatter was doing to the black fellow was looking for trouble. Well in 1942, which was five years later, would be 1937, when we finished taking the [unintelligible] on the Ashburton. 1942 I was invited to go out to Skull Springs on the Davis River, in the Nullagine district, about two hundred miles east of Nullagine. And I met all the law men from the desert and a lot of other people besides, and we had a meeting there which took six weeks to put through. It was like a United Nations meeting, we had twenty four languages we had sixteen interpreters and it took us six weeks to work out what we were going to do.

CJ. So there were twenty four different tribes....

DM. Twenty four different tribes, the lawmen....

CJ.represented.

DM. The whole of the State's lawmen were there at this meeting. And they give me a crash course in native law and I give them the way the State had fiddled with their estate and what they were entitled to and what they ought to be entitled to. And what they'd have to do to recover it. And they give me a position in the law above any lawman, in the event, since black fellows take some time to get a concensus, in the event of it needing to take a quick decision, if I took any decision well then everybody would stick to that, they'd follow then. If say there was any time that that would happen and in order to give me the status required, they knew all about status, protocol and all that sort of thing, they been doing it for a thousand years, in fact I think the House of Commons learnt it originally from Australian desert. I think Caucasian nations, the Caucasian people were evolved in Australia. I think that this is where they come from. And when the ice age was on, ten, twelve, fifteen thousand years ago, when the seas were three or four hundred feet lower than they are now, they walked out of Australia up through India and into Europe and some of them never come back and by selective mating they, you know, the various tribes in Europe were formed originally coming from Australia. Some of them mated with the African negroes in Africa, others mated with Mongols in Asia and you get the that, in the Middle East you get this mixture of Mongoloids and negroes and in Europe you.... those that went straight through, they developed into Caucasians and the parent stock are still in Australia. Well the story is of course that they come from somewhere, forty thousand years ago, into Australia, in fact when we first come here they reckoned they'd

only been here a thousand years and they'd just come from somewhere, nobody guessed where. They could see where they'd come down all the Malay Straits and up in the....

CJ. Yes, that's the theory that they came the other way.

DM. Yes, but in fact they come out the other way. And they'd left these little colonies as they went out. And I think that they originated in Australia and grew up with the dinosaur.... They evolved here with the animals before the continent drifted away from South America, from South, southern, you know, Australia was hooked onto the Great Southland and there was a time when all the continents of the world were stuck together, before they started to drift and I've got no doubt that the I can't prove it at this stage, but I've got no doubt that the black fellows evolved in Australia and went out from it into Europe. And there's so many similarities with them and if they'd have come in from Europe or from somewhere, well then they'd be one of the bunch, you know, they'd be one of a type, but you could take them, till recent times, when they emptied the desert, when that Blue Streak⁵ that was going, that was supposed to be there....

CJ. Blue Streak?

DM. Yes, you see they emptied the desert when the Blue Streak rocket was [there], that was an excuse to whip them out of the desert and put them into concentration camps all round the desert. Now you could go into the desert and you could get every type in Europe in the heart of the desert. Well if they were.... come from somewhere, they'd only be one type, but you got the whole [lot] of the round head, square head, heart-shaped peoples, short ones, long ones, the whole lot of them. Every type that you get in

5 The Blue Streak was a British-made missile.

Europe was in the desert. Well you wouldn't expect that they'd send a representative of each to produce in the first mob that come in would you? Anyhow this is all on the side, but we....I was given a piece of land around Nullagine, I had about a hundred and fifty square miles of land or more, so that I could approach the State Government as an equal. I had my own ground, the same as all the tribes have got their own land, well I was given control of a piece of land, so that when I approached the Government I come to them as an equal. Of course Bob Coverley the bloke we were talking about, he reckoned I was poking my nose into business that didn't concern me and if I didn't get out I'd be in gaol. So I was [put in gaol].

CJ. When you say you got the land, from whom did you get the land?

DM. From the black fellows.

CJ. Yes.

DM. Like they've got a means of marking out the land, they've got great boards that they carve to show the boundaries and the history of the thing, it's all present on these boards.

CJ. And this area was near Nullagine?

DM. It was round [the area], the Nullagine townsite was in it. And I still own that land, I've never taken possession of it yet, but everybody knows it's mine. And so it goes. Well of course I was rejected by the Government and I reported back to them. Now we had people going back keeping in touch with all the desert people, and in 1946 it was agreed, of course, that if they didn't do what we wanted them to do, well we'd withdraw our labour in the Pilbara and make a stand. And of course in May 1st, 1946, well of course this strike happened and since then we've been in

trouble.

CJ. Would you tell me about the strike; how did you organise it?

DM. Well I never organised it at all, Dooley Bin Bin and the people organised it, but I was....They nominated Dooley Bin Bin at that meeting. If we had to have a strike he was obviously the best man to have, they knew their people, what their capacities were. He wasn't at the meeting but they nominated him. And we had to pick up a man from the settled portion and the blokes in there picked Clancy McKenna. And these two blokes were given the job of organising the people so that on the first of May they came out on strike.

CJ. How did they get the message through to all these different tribes, to stop work on a certain day?

DM. Oh well Dooley Bin Bin went into a mate of mine in Marble Bar and he got him to give him a calendar, so that he could mark off every day, you know, until come the first of May, which was March, and then that was the date. Well Dooley having got that calendar, every time he went to a place he'd do another one and show them how to mark it off, so that when they come to the first of May that was it. And then he'd go onto the next one, he'd do one there and so forth. So apparently that's the way he did it. I wasn't with them, because I couldn't come within five chain of a congregation of black fellows in those, without written permission. It was worth two hundred pounds, or two years gaol or both. This had to be done in a clandestine manner.

CJ. Were you actually convicted?

DM. Yes in due course I was up on three counts for that, tempting and persuading natives to leave their legal service.

I got ninety six pounds odd fine or five months gaol. I got an appeal to Privy Council which I've never taken up. In the High Court they said that true, that the West Australian blackfellows are virtually slaves. They couldn't leave the master without permission, they were as tightly tied as any medieval villein or serf to the Lord of the Manor. But nevertheless West Australia is a sovereign State, and while those laws applied, they had to be observed and if you breach them, well you have to suffer the consequences. Yet here was a State that got control, had a 70th section, had to provide one per cent of the gross revenue. Now the Act of Native Affairs which replaced the 70th section was called, and a long title, an Act to make provision for the better caring and protection of the West Australian black fellow. In fact it was a slave act. This is how you can twist words. People who didn't know any better thought that it was in fact better. But have a look at the Act, you couldn't work a black fellow except under permit and when he worked under permit he couldn't leave his legal service without the permission of the boss or the policeman who was his protector. And there was no minimum standard of wages. Now when I was had up for enticing and persuading natives to leave their legal service on De Grey Station, we cited De Grey as an example. And Laurie O'Neill, the Inspector for Natives, he admitted that the black fellows were living in the creeks, like cattle. They had no houses, they had no water supply, they had no sanitation or anything of that nature and they had no minimum standard of wage. They were getting a dollar twenty five, but the Commission was satisfied, that's all they had to do. And that was it. Well now here it is, they had no minimum standard of wages, they couldn't leave

their legal service, they worked on their own land to make an alien person rich and they couldn't leave it. If they did they had to get the policeman's permission or the bosses permission. Who's going to give you permission to go if you don't have to pay wages, bloodyridiculous. And this is an Act to make provision for the better care and protection of Australian Aborigines. Now there was another section that prevented anybody without written permission to be found within five chains of a congregation of black fellows camped or travelling in pursuance of the native custom. So that by putting that provision between the blacks and the whites nobody could come in contact with [them], nobody knew what the....what the black fellows were doing, they were isolated on the station. So that they were illiterate, isolated and destitute, so that they'd never ever be able to claim what was legally, they were legally entitled to. And this is the so called native question, it's nothing to do with the black fellows, it's all to do with a deliberate organised steal. What we got here is stolen property. We've stolen the black fellow's land, we've given him no compensation. We set out to destroy him. It's a matter of genocide, deliberately organised genocide, but the black fellows are too tough, they just had....they didn't die away.

CJ. They've lived here for many years.....

DM. Yes, well they're....

CJ. They've come to terms with this environment.

DM. Well we've got all sorts of slanders going.

Did you hear about Daisy Bates, about what a wonderful woman Daisy Bates was. Here's a book that was put out, a fellow named McEwan, we get a quotation here, talking about Daisy Bates,

These are the sort of things that are quoted in time and but they don't....nobody knows what sort of woman she was.

"The other influential book, Daisy Bates, The Passing of the Aborigine, appears to be experiencing a revival of interest. Expert opinion of this work is very harsh. A professor of Australian linguistics at the University of Adelaide say that it's the most destructive book ever written on aborigines. If anybody other than Daisy Bates had written that book they would have been condemned as a racist. People regard her as a heroine, but she was never a blood brother of the aborigine, this is nonsense. There is no such thing. In her book she alleges the women killed their children and ate them. She sent the bones of one of the alleged dead children to the Adelaide University for investigation. The late Professor J. B. Cleland examined these bones and found them to be those of a wild cat. She claimed that she could speak a hundred and eighty eight aboriginal dialects, but in fact she couldn't even speak the language of the aborigines at Oldea where she'd spent sixteen years."

And yet she's put up as an expert. We were using that to take some photographs out the other day. But that's a useful thing. I don't know who....this McCallum, he's supposed to be....

CJ. Oh Humphrey McQueen.

DM. Yes McQueen. A very useful book.

CJ. Yes.

DM. You ought to have plenty of them in your place.

CJ. Yes. So where did the next part of the case go to?

DM. Well they were struggling and they maintained themselves. See in the first instance I couldn't come within five chain of them of course. And they maintained themselves as well as they could on kangaroo skins, goat skins, pearl shells and whatever, until such time as I could come and live amongst them. Well we had a chap named....When I was in gaol I was arrested several times, I been in gaol six or seven, eight times, I forget how many times.

CJ. All for this same reason?

DM. Well for doing various things, under section, that section

you couldn't come with five chain of them. I was arrested three times on that one. And on one of the occasions I'd been in gaol and while I was in gaol they had...they formed the Aboriginal Defence League down here and a parson named the Reverend R. V. P. Hodge, a Church of England parson, he was secretary of that organisation and he was given the job to come north and investigate what was going on. They undertook to give us legal aid amongst other things. They formed this thing at a Town Hall meeting, made a collection and got some funds coming in. And Hodge was sent north to find out what was going on. Well I had some appeals to sign for Clancy and Dooley, we were taking some appeals against the High Court and I wanted some signatures on the appeal, and I knew that Peter Hodge was coming up because in The Sunday Times that day, The Sunday Times had a note to the fact that he was coming up and I went out to pick him up from the aerodrome, the aerodrome is seven miles from Port Hedland, and twelve miles...the strike camp was out five miles away from Port Hedland and Port Hedland was in like that. So when I picked Peter Hodge up I said, "Well I'll run you into town and then I've got to go and get these forms signed for Clancy and Dooley." And he said, "Where are they?" And I pointed out where they were. And I had an arrangement with the people to be five chain away from the camp at least because I thought I could crack this section in the High Court. So I anticipated Peter would want to go straight out and I used him as a 'bell wether' unbeknownst to him. So of course he went out and the people were more than five chain away from their camp and I just introduced him to them when the policeman come along and arrested the pair of us for being within five chain of the congregation of black fellows. And of course he got fined ten pounds and he was

away without leave. He was in charge of the tuberculosis campaign, the Church of England took a prominent part in getting the Commonwealth Government to take on the responsibility of eliminating tuberculosis from Australia. And he had to report to the synod and he was away without leave to come up to us and the synod was in meeting, in session. He had to get back quickly and they fined him ten pound and away he went. Well they put me in....I'd been out on bail with Peter, but as soon as they fined him ten pound they put me in without bail, they wouldn't let me go. And....

CJ. Where?

DM. In Port Hedland. In gaol. And I had to stay there until the Court heard my case. Well while I was in gaol waiting for this Court to come on they put a madman in with me. A fellow named McKay, he'd been picked up the other side of Nullagine. He'd gone round the bend poor bugger. He was the second coming of Christ. He said that!...he was in a strait jacket when they brought him in, he'd been in a strait jacket for four days and he was a hell of a mess. Anyhow I persuaded them to take him out of the strait jacket and give him a bath. And then he was telling me about how they'd....His brother was in charge of water when he was there and he made an awful mess of it.

CJ. In charge of.....?

DM. Water. But they'd given him control over fire. And when he was in the gaol in Nullagine, they put a forty gallon drum of petrol all over the gaol and set fire to it and he just put it out like that. He said, "I've got control of fire, me brother made a mess of it, he had control of water, and he

wasn't much good. And of course when they wake up who I am," he said, "they'll come bringing frankincense and myrrh and precious stones," he said, "you'll be on half of them though." /Laughter/ Anyhow he went on a hunger strike, he reckoned they were trying to poison him. Well that's the [position]. I was trying to prepare a case to defend myself and I had to put up with this for seventeen hours. Anyhow I got fined, I got three months without the option. And I appealed. And they wouldn't take any notice of me, so I wrote down to Curran our solicitor and I said, "What do I do?"

CJ. Curran?

DM. Curran, Fred Curran. He said, "Appeal under the Habeas Corpus act. As soon as they come in the morning, make an appeal to them. So I did that and Les Fletcher the policeman, he said, "I've heard of this bloke, who is this Habeas Corpus?" So I wrote down to Curran again and I said, "This bloke's politically and legally illiterate, tell me again what to do." So he said, "Alright tell him to have a look at the Justices Act of Western Australia," and he quoted the section and of course they let me go. But this is the idea that they could ^{put} me on ice, they could bust the strike, they reckon. Anyhow when we took that appeal to the High Court, we used Peter Hodge as a 'bell wether,' like he went through first, and it was found that they were making too narrow an interpretation and that you could come within five chain of a congregation of black fellows. And of course the High Court set that decision aside and of course I followed through. All my convictions were set aside too. Well then I could get up amongst them and organise them then, from then on. Well we, I was a miner and there was plenty of minerals there to work. So for the next twenty five years we fed and clothed ourselves on mineral

production and we established the statistics of our production established the Pilbara as a rich mineral province.

CJ. How many did you have there?

DM. Seven hundred.

CJ. And what area was this?

DM. The Pilbara.

CJ. The Pilbara.

DM. From Nullagine to [Roebourne].

END OF SIDE ONE TAPE ONE

TAPE ONE SIDE TWO

CJ. This was Nullagine to Roebourne?

DM. Yes. Well we not only had to contend with the mining sharks that were so abundant in the mining industry, we not only had to contend with them, but we had to contend with all the officers of the Native Welfare Department, they were at us in all, every conceivable manner to try and interfere with what we were doing, to try and subvert the people, to destroy the people. And we've had them on our back ever since 1946, in fact ever since 1942, in fact, you know, just to do what they could to subvert the whole struggle. And anything they could do to weaken our reputation - it was so bad in fact that we proceeded against Middleton⁶ in 1957 I think it was.

CJ. Middleton?

DM. Mmm. Commissioner Middleton, for slander. We coupled him with the ABC, he slandered us and the ABC took it up. They rang him up and got his opinion and blurted it out over the air. He reckoned, see they'd been, our blokes had been picked up by the police from time to time to track up murderers and other law breakers. And the previous occasion one of them very near got shot by a murderer, they tracked him up and he was laying behind a tree and he jumped up and very near shot one of our blokes. And they never got paid for this.

CJ. The tracker?

DM. Yes. So when the police come again to pick up a tracker to go and find somebody, they said, "Well you find somebody else. Every time we do any work for you we get nothing for it. And it's dangerous, we're likely to get shot." So they knocked the police back and they complained about it and Middleton said this

6 S.G.Middleton, Commissioner for Native Affairs.

was quite out of character for the black fellows and it wasn't the real lawman that were talking, it was European influence and coerced and threatened, and done all that sort of thing and he rubbished them, you know. So we took him up on that one, the ABC published it, Elsie went up and got a transcript of the, of this, what they put over the air. They don't put them out any more because they got found guilty. And they appealed to the High Court, but they never took the case on....

CJ. So did you win that case?

DM. Yes we won that case. They let Middleton slip out, he hadn't published it, it was the ABC that had published it, but he was involved, it was his word.

CJ. When was this?

DM. Oh 1957 I think.

CJ. '57?

DM. Mmm.

CJ. Now with these three hundred natives were you actually working the area between Nullagine and Roebourne?

DM. Well it depends on the market. You know the market, minerals are a very unstable market. At different times one mineral's worth money, another time something else is worth money. Well as various minerals become valuable and the others lost their value we turned from one to another. Especially when the Korean War was on during '50, '53, '50, or whatever it was, '52, '55, whenever it was, well wolfram was a high price, well of course we opened three wolfram fields and we were the first ones to sell wolfram as a commercial, as a commodity in Western Australia, there was never any wolfram sold before we started it. And we were the third....

7 The Korean War commenced in 1950.

CJ. And you could actually take up a lease?

DM. Oh yes. Well initially they claimed that black fellows couldn't hold a miner's right, they couldn't hold the title. So we established, we registered Northern Development and Mining Proprietary Limited, private company.

CJ. What was it called?

DM. Northern Development and Mining Proprietary Limited. So that they indirectly they got the civil rights that they'd been robbed of through a company, because a company is an artificial individual, you can do everything an individual can do except vote or get converted to religion. And we weren't interested in any of those things at that time, so we just did.... we could sue and be sued; you can hold ground, you can hold a miner's right. So that that give us all the authority that we wanted and we acted through that.

CJ. What other minerals did you mine there?

DM. Well, copper, lead, tin, tantalite, columbite, beryl. wolfram, scheelite, of course, manganese, well the whole spectrum that are in the Pilbara.

CJ. And did you make a reasonable profit out of this, the company?

DM. Well when they liquidated Northern Development and Mining in 1953, '4, we were earning eleven hundred pounds a day. And the company liquidation.

CJ. Who?

DM. Middleton. There was a special committee of enquiry by Sir Ross McDonald, who was previously Minister for Native Affairs and he found in our favour, on us particularly. And they found in our favour, and on the basis of that to prove our bona

fides, we took two government nominees on our Board of Directors. James of Western James and the chief, the mining, the Mines Department Engineer, the Chief Engineer, Chief Mining Engineer, Brisbane.

CJ. That was his name Brisbane?

DM. Brisbane was his name. Now immediately they got on our Board of Management, our Secretary, O'Shannessy was also a director, they took our articles to the High Court, to the Supreme Court, I was governing director, and I could veto anything that went on in that Board, well to circumvent that, they took our articles to the Supreme Court and had them amended so that I had no power, more power, than anybody else. And they called the meetings to the convenience of the majority of the directors, who were in Perth and they liquidated Northern Development and Mining over my protest.

CJ. How many were on that Board?

DM. Four.

CJ. O'Shannessy, Brisbane, James and you?

DM. James and myself, yes. And over my protests they liquidated the company, they put it into liquidation. Now while I was down in Perth arguing the point about this, I was down here for about six weeks and while I was away we were producing a drum of columbite a day, tantacolumbite a day, worth seven hundred pounds. And while I was away Ernie Mitchell shifted the gang from the camp, the place where they were working, into another place where they could get more.

CJ. Ernie Mitchell being a native lad?

DM. He was a half caste bloke, he was one of the people elected, he was one of their leaders. He was a half caste

from the Port Hedland district and of course the desert people they've got a lot of protocol, a local man has got to have status, so being a local bloke, although they weren't very impressed by him, nevertheless he was a local man therefore he'd have status where we were working. So while I was away, in his wisdom, he shifted them out of the working place which they were working in and they got into other places and they were turning out haematite with very little columbite, tanta-columbite in it. When I come back there was about ten ton of it in the camp and you could see, as soon as I saw it, red, you know, columbite is black. I said, "What are you doing with this?" And he said, "Oh we're sending it away." So I wired Derby who was our agents, brokers, to be careful of the stuff that had been getting away. We used to get an advance, I forget how much a ton, how much a drum, on the shipping belt, and it's like, although tantacolumbite's one of the most difficult ores to sell, very refractory, and very hard to deal with and very few people can sell it to the market. But Derby's had so much confidence in us that they used to advance us against the stockments.

CJ. Derby?

DM. Derby and Co, mineral brokers, Adelaide.

CJ. Mmm.

DM. And they were advancing, I think it was something like five hundred pounds a drum. And of course with this stuff it wouldn't be worth five hundred pounds, so I wired Derby's to be careful of the stuff and have a good look at it because some of this haematite may have got into some of the stuff they had. We stopped sending any stuff away, any further away, and put them back into the other places and we were back on a drum a day when they immediately....When we settled up with Derbys we owed them

sixteen thousand pounds, they'd advanced sixteen thousand pounds more than the stuff was worth, but we were still producing a drum a day worth eleven hundred pound. We had thirteen drums in hand. They moved to liquidate the company straight away and they just scattered our assets like as if they were nothing, they just scattered them to the four winds.

CJ. What was the motive behind liquidating it?

DM. Well they just didn't want black fellows independent on their own man, they wanted under the hand and control of authority, they wanted them to be nobody, they wanted them to be poor and destitute and illiterate and isolated. Take too long a story to give you all the nasty details, but they were on our back all the time, the civil servants, the project officers, district officers and so forth. Their whole occupation was to trip us and interfere with us and subvert the people and destroy them. And they did in time, in 1959, Middleton sent a special...having liquidated Northern Development and Mining. We reformed, I come down here for nine months to give Middleton a fair go. He reckoned if I'd get out of his hair he'd show them what he could do. And I was away for nine months, to see if I could save the company from liquidation and I had thirteen thousand pounds worth of minerals and I couldn't sell it. Every time I went to sell it the liquidator said he might have a claim on it. So we took it to the Supreme Court and we asked Sir James Dwyer, the Chief Justice, to find that the liquidator had no claim on it. And in a very insulting case where....T.J. Hughes was our solicitor at the time, and you've never seen such a charade. He sneered at him, and slung off at him and did all sorts of things, nobody in the court bar ourselves. And he found that there was no need to bring down this ruling because the liquidator had never claimed the mineral

was his, he said it might be his. And here's six hundred people being starved by Middleton. He wanted them to agree to disassociate themselves from me or else he wouldn't give them any tucker, he'd starve them to death. And they give him, I think it was four thousand pounds to feed and....they were turning out eleven hundred pound a day and he only had to feed them, they could have continued doing that. But he wouldn't give them any tucker until they agreed to disassociate themselves from me, and they refused to do that. So he just never give them any tucker. So I was asked to come back again, and they told me before I left that they wanted me to form another company and come back, if they called me.

CJ. The natives did?

DM. Yes. So I registered Pindan Proprietary Limited and they called....

CJ. You registered?

DM. Pindan Proprietary Limited. And they called me back. Now I went up there with Jack Williams, secretary of the company and Ron Bertram who was our lawyer, (apart from T. J. Hughes) he's now a Member for Mount Hawthorn. And we arrived back in the camp in May, 1955. And Middleton he was too choked up, he couldn't talk, he was too emotional, his voice box was choked up on him, so we had to give him a drink of water to open his voice box and he's thumping the table and said that he'd starve them all to death unless they disassociated themselves from me. And Bertram said, "Under what section of the Act have you got these powers." And he quoted the section. He said, "This only gives you the right to call for a financial statement from anybody that's had any dealings with black fellows." He said, "I've got the power and I'll use it. No mineral bloke will buy their minerals

no storekeeper will sell them their stores. I've got the power and I'll use it. I'll starve them to death." So I said, "Well it's no good us arguing the point, these people have got to live with him, he's [unintelligible] ," So we sat aside and they called us back in twenty minutes and one bloke said "Oh well if he must have a go, he can have a go, but we want this bloke to look after our [interests]." He's robbing us, we give him four thousand pounds and he hasn't accounted for what he done with it. What's the good of having him looking after us? So if he wants any of our business we want you (me) to be there to keep a check on him." And he said, "It's either him or me." I said, "Oh well in that case you can fuck off. We don't want nothing to do with you. Well you've been starving us for nine months now." Which he had been doing too. And so we went on again.that he still owed them. And he said, "Oh I'll split it up on an individual basis."

CJ. This is....?

DM. Middleton.

CJ. Middleton.

DM. And amongst other things they'd bought a truck to look after themselves, and on the basis of splitting the money up on an individual basis, he took the truck off them, so that the money could be split up on an individual basis. And the only money that he give them were those that were prepared to go onto a native reserve and he'd feed their kids. And he took their truck off them, so that they would be, you know, have no means of looking after themselves. That was his version of Native Welfare.

CJ. So what happened to the Pindan Proprietary Limited?

DM. Well we....I had thirteen thousand dollars worth of minerals. It was...when we had this case in the Supreme Court

- this thing's not talking now is it?

CJ. Oh!

DM. We had...when we had this case in the Supreme Court I had thirteen thousand pounds worth of minerals and I couldn't sell it, because the liquidator said he might have a claim on it. But now George Constantine, who was manager of British Metals, mineral brokers, he come in and give evidence in that court, said that he'd take the stuff so long as it had a clear title. And of course they couldn't give us that because they reckoned there was no need to find that the liquidator had no claim on it. As we came out of the court George said, "Come up and I'll give you a deposit on it right away." So I sold the minerals to him and of course we were in funds again. So we formed Pindan Proprietary Limited, we went up and we went straight into gear. And of course that went in business until in 1959 Middleton sent a special category officer, Bill Courtney, now he was appointed directly by the Minister and he was responsible to him and nobody else. And there was this thing that developed between him and a fellow named Day, who was the district officer, because Courtney reckoned his office was his house and Day was district officer and he wanted to know what he was doing. He said, "Oh that's my business." Well he come up to persuade them to become drunk, and all they had to do was prove they could carry their liquor like men, they'd be accepted by equals by the white society. They were rich beyond the dreams of abos. We had a deal with Albert G. Sims of Newtown, Sydney, on a fifty/fifty basis, we had manganese claims at Nimingarra. Those three claims you see in that document there. Now we had an agreement with a French firm to sell nineteen thousand tons of manganese at twenty five pound a ton. Now we could lob it FOB⁸, Port Hedland, at five pound a

8 FOB means Free on Board.

ton. So there's twenty pounds a ton profit in it. Now Albert G. Sims had to provide enough machinery to put two thousand ton a month FOB Port Hedland and whatever that cost he'd get a pound share for every pounds worth of machinery; we'd get a pounds share for every pounds worth of machinery, in a joint enterprise, Pindan Proprietary Limited, which was set up for that purpose. Middleton persuaded Hallam,⁹ why go for half when you can get the lot. Now this was a prelude to coming in on the ground floor for iron. See we had to get an embargo on manganese lifted, which we managed to do through Northern Minerals Syndicate, which had managers....

CJ. Who?

DM. Northern Minerals Syndicate, which was made up of some politicians and others. And Menzies' Secretary for National Development, that advised me on an advisory committee. White¹⁰ I think his name was, or some name like that. He was one of the members of Northern Minerals Syndicate and we "floated a kite" to the extent that if we could get a ton, if we could sell a ton of every three tons that we found of new manganese we could sell it, if the embargo was lifted so we could sell it overseas, that would give an incentive to prospectors to find manganese. Well White, I think it was White, advised Menzies and Fadden on this and they lifted the manganese embargo. Now we had that as prelude to getting the embargo on iron lifted. See BHP reckoned there was only fifty six years of iron in the whole of Australia and that it had to be conserved, therefore there was an embargo on its export. In fact the place was rotten with iron, but they knew nothing about it. The Government, the Mines Department, was only a gold mine department, they knew nothing about minerals.

9 J.W.Hallam was W.A. executive officer for Albert G. Sims, a Sydney metal company.

10 Thomas White was the Minister for Trade and Customs.

I argued the point with Telford many times that they should have, you know, they should have more geologists, they should have a look in the field to see what was about. They'd only been interested in gold up till that time.

CJ. Telford?

DM. Telford, yes, the Secretary for the Mines Department. And he seemed to think he knew what he was doing, but I said, "You have a look at the figures. One mineral deposit is worth ten gold mines. The value is in minerals, not in gold." Anyhow we had this agreement with Albert G. Sims as a prelude to getting into iron, which of course was going to be the most profitable of all. Now Hallam was persuaded by Middleton that why go for fifty/fifty when you could get the lot of the manganese ignoring the fact of course that we, you know we wouldn't get any iron if we lost the manganese. So Hallam fell in with him and they sent this special category officer up to get all our blokes drunk and in due course he persuaded them to become drunk; and they were showing they could carry their liquor like men. Twenty men would get twenty bottles of wine on a table and they'd each stand up and drink it down, of course they'd be belting each other over the head with the bloody bottles in ten minutes. And this was Courtney's idea of subverting the people. Anyhow even our own lawyer, T. J. Hughes, fell in with Middleton later, so that I had six to one against, five to one against me. So I just resigned and handed over to the people and said, "Oh well, if that's what you want to do, well then go for your life." And I got out. Dooley Bin Bin and two thirds of the people they followed me out. They said, "Well we never went on strike to get drunk. We went on strike to get our rights, to get one per cent of the gross revenue." So they followed me out and they

hunted us out as we stood up, without a penny in our pocket, just with the clothes we stood on.

CJ. What year?

DM. This was 1959. Well see Hallam instead of buying enough equipment to put two thousand tons FOB at Port Hedland, he got Don Rhodes, contractors, to do the stuff on contract. Now he knew nothing about mining, now we had fifty seven thousand tons of proven ore at Nimingarra and instead of us equipping it with our own machinery, he got Don Rhodes to cart this stuff. Now they broke fifty two thousand out of fifty seven thousand tons. Now our contract called for having this stuff sent out in twenty ton parcels, like a truck load carriestwenty tons. Well that had to be dumped on the flat, twenty ton loads, and each twenty ton was assayed and the aggregate assay would be the shipping parcel. Now Don Rhodes was a contractor and he was already in manganese himself. When they opened the manganese for pegging, of course Northern Minerals seen it, Don Rhodes, Bell Brothers and everybody else, they raced in and they pegged all over the place. We only got two out of almost five hundred deposits we'd looked at. Because they were stripped out by these other fellows. And of course Don Rhodes was in competition with Albert G. Sims so where he put all this manganese was on a scree coming down from the side of a hill, although there was a good clay flat there, underneath that flat there was eight feet of rubbish, iron stone, quartz, rubble of all sorts. And when he bulldozed the stuff into a heap he took about eight foot with it and he finished up with a couple of hundred thousand tons of rubbish, everything was all mixed together in a heap. Now Hallam had spent a hundred and twenty five thousand pounds outside his agreement to do all this

work and of course he'd sold nothing, never got any money back. He just didn't know what he was doing. Now when they took over from us, when I walked out and handed over to them, it was to recover this hundred and twenty five thousand pounds that the whole thing was about. Now Middleton gate crashed our general annual meeting of shareholders, and I said, "What are you doing here?" And he said, "Well certain aboriginals have asked me to look their interests." I said, "We'll soon find out what you're doing." We took a vote on it and by virtue of the fact that he controlled the drunks, he controlled five eighths of our voting power....

CJ. Five eighths?

DM. Five eighths. We only had three eighths. So that's how I got out, I resigned, said, "Alright, well take the lot." Well then they hunted us out just as we stood up. Now then the drunks, see I was trying to persuade them to leave this manganese alone, but the whites set the conditions for work and the wages and when it was all established, if they wanted to go and work then come in then after. That was one, because otherwise this Hallam was a thief, he was an immoral [man] he was a nasty bugger, he got a, Peter and others, he bought wine into the camps, two or three cartons of wine, they rolled up in a mattress, they'd get three or four fifteen year old girls and take them out in the bush and Hallam and them would have a sexo party up in the bloody bush. Now this is Middleton's idea of teaching them western style. Hallam would boast that he only had to know how much, who and how much and when to pay and you could drive a wagonette through any bloody law ever brought down in Western Australia. I said, "Don't you ever let me find you bribing anybody associated with our mob or I'll put you in gaol that quick you'll be dizzy

man." This is how he was getting at these unsophisticated black fellows, teaching them western style. Well of course when this mess was on they took the drunks out there and they only had five thousand tons left in this deposit. Now they had lost their French connections, we had a contract to sell nineteen thousand tons to a French firm, they lost that because they had run out of time. So Metal Traders, they took a contract with Metal Traders. Instead of taking a contract for five thousand tons, that they had in hand, they took a contract for seven thousand tons. They never had seven thousand tons, there was only five thousand left in this deposit, developed and tested. So he broke the five thousand he carted in and then he went into the side of the hill where it never ever been assayed and you could see it red with iron, and he drew two thousand ton out of that and put it on top of the clean ore. And when they found out what they had done they had to hand pick it and shovel it off with hand, by these drunks and he got into all sorts of trouble. Now Metal Traders proceeded against him for damages, for breach of contract and they got a nine thousand damage action against Pindan Proprietary Limited, that was killed stillborn, before it ever got off the ground. And this is teaching the black fellows western style. Well now he had a hundred and twenty five thousand pounds to recover. Well of course at our next meeting, Middleton come in and he still had five eighths of the voting power and Hughes¹¹ in the meantime had found out that Hughesie was a Charlie, our solicitor, and he wrote a long letter to me and said that if I'd work with him they'd see what they could undo the damage they'd done, but it was too late then. Anyhow he come in as our solicitor, he had Elsie Lee's proxies, she was a shareholder in this company, Pindan. So

11 Incorrect name

he had her proxy and he acted for her and I had a share and Jacob Oberdoo had a share, but we were still only three against eight, three against five. And they virtually handed Pindan Proprietary Limited over to Albert G. Sims, when they did. Hand and bound, bound and gagged, to recover this hundred and twenty five thousand pound. Now they went out there and they hand picked what they could out of this dump of rubbish until they recovered a hundred and twenty five thousand pounds worth of manganese. And then Albert G. Sims got out, and the claim was given over to Bell Brothers, to see what they could do with it. The Minister got the shares. This special category officer, Bill Courtney and the local district officer, they just took the shares and handed them over to the Minister. The Minister's got powers to take a black fellow's assets to protect them. He's still got them, Ken Colbung's got them now. Same with Riverdale. We were buying Riverdale in the Nullagine district for ten thousand pounds and Middleton persuaded the seller to take the final payment of four thousand pound off him, he had to borrow it off the Mines Department, he couldn't justify it coming out of his department. So he borrowed it from the Mines Department through our Director Eaton. But he couldn't get it when he wanted it, but when he did get it, when they liquidated Northern Development and Mining, he claimed that he had this interest in Riverdale and he just took it over. Now he handed it over to Jiggalong Rescue Mission, and they just... We had three thousand head of breeding cattle on Meentheena, Glenearn and Riverdale and he handed it over to Jiggalong Rescue Mission and all those squatters round about there, who were all sheep squatters, had sheep in those days, they're all cattle stations now, and they never bought any cattle, you wonder where they got them from. You know the whole

thing stinks.

CJ. Where are these stations?

DM. Well Riverdale, the homestead at Riverdale is the best town in Nullagine, it was the warden's house in Nullagine and Riverdale is all round Nullagine.

CJ. And Jiggalong?

DM. Well Jiggalong is a native reserve, about a hundred and fifty, sixty miles south of Nullagine, but they come up and occupied the homestead and whipped all the tools out of it, they got all the cattle they could get and went back to Jiggalong again, for nothing. They just give it to the so-called rescue mission.

CJ. And Meentheena?

DM. Meentheena, well Glenearn was alongside Riverdale and Meentheena was alongside Glenorn. We had three adjoining properties down the Nullagine River.

CJ. Along which river?

DM. The Nullagine River.

CJ. The Nullagine.

DM. I had Glenearn myself and I chucked it in. Now we had an agreement with O'Shannessy, Secretary, who liquidated Northern Development and Mining, and he signed an agreement as trustee for a company to be formed and he had to form Glenearn Pastoral Proprietary Limited and hand the shares over to ten selected individuals as deferred wages. Instead of that when they liquidated Northern Development and Mining, they'd claimed that these moneys were due to the creditors, in fact they were deferred wages. But they didn't pay any rent on Glenearn and Glenearn was forfeited because they hadn't paid the rent on it. That got rid of that one. He give Riverdale, of course, to the rescue mission,

although he kept the title in his own name, and finally passed it over to Ken Colbung. It was held by Native Affairs for years after. And he sold Meentheena to Bell Brothers for half the price we paid for it. They dropped nine tenths of it and they just used it for shooting a few cattle while they were working the manganese out there. This is the way they collected the assets for the creditors, so-called.

CJ. Since 1959 have you been involved with natives and mining in the North West, or have you shifted more to the pastoral....?

DM. We were engaged in mining right up until 1971 when it just got too tough, we had to get out. Well it just did - they wouldn't leave us alone and there was nothing we could do that....

CJ. You were working under Pindan?

DM. Oh no, oh no. Pindan was wrecked. This was liquidated by Middleton in 1959.

CJ. Yes, in 1959.

DM. Well we formed Nomads Proprietary Limited.

CJ. Nomads?

DM. Yes.

CJ. And did this work as a company until 1971?

DM. It's still working. This was our prospecting company and then we had Pingar which is our mining company.

CJ. Pingar?

DM. Pingar Proprietary Limited. P I N G A R. They're both still alive and still operative, but we got out of mining. It got so tough. It doesn't matter what we do, we're only just unpaid prospectors rich and powerful friends. As soon as we've got something worthwhile they get in and sweep it up. There's a technique they established whereby they'd get some drunk

but finally after they'd got us interferred with well enough with....some drunk would apply for forfeiture at the Warden's Court and if he got it, if he made it stick, and he got the title, to it, then he'd sell out to a respectable local gentlemen and he'd sell out to some of our rich and powerful friends. You know they'd come in with clean hands.

CJ. Now you've told me the story of your involvement and mining with the natives up to the present day; would you tell me about the pastoral interests now?

DM. Well in 1942 when we were at Skull Springs, at that meeting I was talking about, I was given the responsibility of getting hold of control and getting control of a strip of country between the desert and the settled areas, through to the coast, up to Wallal and back, down to as far as towards Jiggalong. Now we could get the white fellar's title on that ground so that we could have a buffer between the desert and the settled areas and then as we developed those, we'd draw the desert people out and teach them western technology and they'd settle in these areas, leaving some in the desert, but some would come in and get trained and go back again. Now I'm still working on that project and those three blocks that we had in '52/'3, with Northern Development and Mining, but they were taken off Northern Development and Mining. They were part of that programme, we've lost them for the time being.

CJ. These are the three you've mentioned?

DM. Yes, Glenearn, Riverdale and Meentheena. They were part of it, there was also Yandearra, which was six hundred and sixty thousand acres too in those days.

CJ. Yan...?

DM. Yandearra. We still had Yandearra then, when they took those three off us. Now this is worth a comment because

that was in my name and Middleton, or the liquidator claimed he took an action in the Supreme Court to take the title of Yandegarra off me. I was holding it in trust for the black fellows and it cost me eight hundred pound to defend the thing in the Supreme Court and he took it right up to the court door when the case come on he withdrew. But I've got a lot of documents which you've got in your archives as a result of that, and you'll find out just what he did do over that. Well they withdrew, so I still had the ground, I applied to the Lands Department to transfer it to Pindan. And they said, "You can't transfer the ground, there's five hundred dollars rent's due on it, (and you can't tranfer ground while the rent's are due.)" I paid the rent, then they forfeited the ground because we hadn't complied with the stocking conditions. You've got to have so many head of large stock or small stock per thousand acres the first year and then so much. Because we hadn't complied with that they took it off us. We forfeited it. Six weeks later it come up for native reserve, got that for native reserve. So you can imagine, now as soon as they got the drunks nicely pitched up they give them Yandegarra, they give it to the drunks Now we paid eighteen thousand dollars for that and they just give it to the drunks after we forfeited the whole place. So how can you beat the government, they bring you up against the sovereign State, they can do what they like to you. In the meantime when we got out of mining, we'd got into pastoral, we went back, to continue on this programme that I was given to do in 1942. So we bought Strelley which is forty miles east of Port Hedland.

CJ. The native law men asked you to do this?

DM, Yes. Mmm. Then we bought....the Commonwealth Lands

Board, I think it was, they bought Coongan and Warralong for a quarter of a million dollars, with Strelley Pastoral Proprietary Limited handled Strelley, Strelley Pastoral Proprietary Limited. Now all the moveable assets on Coongan and Warralong were transferred to Strelley Pastoral Proprietary Limited but the land is owned by the Lands Trust, the Commonwealth Lands Trust, Land Board. Now we'll have to set up a....well they've got an Act they've just brought down now and we'll have to set up a council or whatever it is to take, to hold the title of that ground in trust for the black fellow. That'll be alright, we'll do that. Well then we bought Carlindi, which is between Strelley and Coongan and Warralong and we're in the process of buying Lalla Rookh, which is out to the west of Coongan and Warralong and we've also bought a place called Callawa, which is further east. There's two places between us and Coongan, between it and Coongan, there's Yarrie and Muccan. Muccan and Yarrie, between Coongan and Callawa, but Callawa's the last one on the edge of the desert. So if we can get hold of Yarrie and Muccan later on, then we'll have a solid strip from the coast out to the desert, out to Lalla Rookh, because we're still on the programme that we set out in 1942.

CJ. Where do you get the money to buy this?

DM. Well we got it out of mining in the first instance, but nowadays we get it from social security. This is the only place we've got anything, well we've not only....We've got some other income apart from that, but from social security is where most of the income comes from age pensions, invalid pensions, widows' pensions, child endowment, or family and so on. And we....

CJ. And they contribute?

DM. Well they bank this jointly. We act like a big family. And what it takes to maintain the people we spend that and any surplus we use to buy properties and so forth. Three, two years ago we set up a private....two and a half years ago we managed to get a private school going with a grant from the Commonwealth Government, when the Labor, just before Labor got tossed out, we set up Nomads Charitable and Educational Foundation, Charitable and Educational Foundation. Now we put a submission into the Labor Government, just before they went out of business. Now Les Johnson tried to get it through the normal channels, you know this business where Frank Gare¹² controls the whole thing and I told him it was stupid to this because it wouldn't reach him, you know, get lost in transit. And we had a terrific argument it, finally he agreed to take a submission direct from me to him and although he only had it a fortnight before the Governor General sacked the Government we got a school out, he endorsed it and we got Strelley Community School out of it. Now this is a bilingual school and they're teaching their own languages as well as English and it's controlled by the local school board, which is the headmaster and the black fellows, you know. And they control the school locally and the Charitable and Educational Foundation looks after the financial side of it. Now we're funded by the Commonwealth Government for that and also having got a certificate of efficiency we get the same moneys that any private school gets from the Education Department and from the Schools' Commission.

CJ. Who provides the teachers?

DM. Oh this is controlled by the Foundation looks after these things.

12 Commissioner of Native Welfare.

CJ. I see. They can employ...

DM. Just a private school.....

CJ.teachers?

DM.same as any private school.

CJ. I see. How many children are at the school?

DM. A hundred and ten I think, or of that nature.

CJ. Ranging from about?

DM. Oh four years old up to whatever.

CJ. About fourteen or fifteen, yes.

DM. And of course we've got adult education going there.

They're learning to read and write Numgamuda, Munjiljara, and other things. We've still got a lot of different languages of course in our camp, because we're the headquarters of the desert black fellows. And as soon as Strelley School got nicely going people at Noonkanbah, now the Land Trust bought, also bought Noonkanbah for the people at the Fitzroy, and the Fitzroy people at Fitzroy Crossing, and the title of that is held by Ken Colbung. Commonwealth money found it, bought it, Ken Colbung is holding it in the Minister for Community Welfare's control, that's under Ken Colbung, or the other way round, whichever way you like, the Minister's got the final say. But they come down and persuaded us to set up a school for them, because they got sick and tired of missing school, weren't allowed to talk their own language. The kids were, you know, just sabotaged and destroyed. A lot of half castes being born and nobody knew who the father was and all the rest of it. So last year they persuaded us....Well the commencement of this year, they persuaded us to set up a school at Noonkanbah, which we did. And although we got a certificate of efficiency and we get the Schools Commission money and the Education Department's money, that only pays half the cost of the

teacher's salary. The Federal government has refused so far to fund that school and we've got to fund it ourselves out of social security money. Now this is how it goes.

CJ. How many teachers there?

DM. Two. We got, I think we've got thirty five, forty kids there. People at Giles want a school. People at Turkey Creek want a school. I believe there's about a hundred people want schools like Strelley School and it's a very embarrassing to the government because they don't know what to do about it. And they just don't like to fund them because they don't want them educated.

CJ. Right would you tell me about the early involvement in 1942, with the pastoral....Were they running sheep or cattle?

DM. Had cattle.

CJ. Cattle. And where were they selling the cattle?

DM. Oh we were just building up a flock, we were just building up a herd. See we had three thousand head of breeding cows and we wanted to build up a....See we had twelve thousand black fellows in the desert and I wanted to have enough so they had a meat supply for all the desert people. We wanted to get ten or twelve thousand breeders before we finished. And we'd only got up to three thousand breeders before they come under attack and we lost them. Now they're all cattle stations, they were all sheep stations in that area before that. Now they're all cattle stations.

CJ. Yes,

DM. Yandearra on the other hand was a....Dalgetys closed nine places down just before the war because they couldn't pay the interest on their mortgages. Yandearra was one of these. Been over stocked and eroded and because it was in bad shape

we took all the stock off it and grassed it with buffel grass and other things and we waited for it to rehabilitate itself before we stocked it again. And because we hadn't continued the erosion process they took it off because we hadn't complied with the stocking procedures. So they're not concerned about - it was only just a ploy of course to get rid of them up there.

CJ. Did you put wells down there?

DM. Oh there were,...

CJ.and fencing?

DM. These were all equipped before we got there and we had to repair and maintain them. Oh no all these places were equipped before we got there.

CJ. And these places, under supervision, the native men would do the maintenance?

DM. Well, they, they in those days, they were able to do their own thing, because they're used to it. Now of course they haven't been in....(is that thing shut on?)

CJ. Mmm, that's right,

DM. Nowadays of course we haven't been in pastoral for thirty years and now the youngsters they've got to be taught, but the old blokes they were able to do it without supervision. But on, all these properties we've got, we've got a white manager, Ray Eckerman, that's at Coongan/Warralong, and they do their own thing, but we need a lot of training now because they haven't been trained.

CJ. Where is Ray Eckerman?

DM. He's Coongan/Warralong. Well you see they're all joined together these properties. Billy Smith is looking after Carlindi. We're still arguing the point about Lalla Rookh as you hear this morning. We had a message being held up. When we went to buy Lalla Rookh, the bloke was in debt to Dalgetys and he

couldn't pay his interest and they were going to fire him out, so they put it up for tender and we tendered for it. And the Lands Department....but normally if want to sell a property you've got to offer it to your neighbour because the Lands Department reckon they're not viable. So being their neighbours, well we thought we'd get no problem in that, so we tendered for this and we got it. The bloke that had it made an application to the Lands Department, he was granted a hundred and fifty thousand acres alongside and just drove all the cattle there. We didn't take possession till we got the Minister's consent. Course the Minister never give us anything see. With the result that before very long we had an empty lease which we weren't going to pay for, we wanted a thousand cattle on it. And the cattle were all taken into this hundred and fifty thousand acres adjoining. So we've been arguing the point about that ever since. So one thing's led to another and now we're in the process of, hopefully, I don't know, we've got a bill of sale over all this bloke's stock, wherever they are. And we'll muster those stock and we'll repossess them, hopefully. This is still in abeyance. And we'll get control of that ground and get rid of the thief alongside who's been stealing all our cattle, with the goodwill apparently of the government. So you see it never finishes, it goes on and on and on. We've still got our head above water.

CJ. Good,

DM. And you never hear anything of this in the papers. This is the stupid....The native question so-called, is all these half castes hopping up and down and saying we ought to have land rights and where's their land rights. They were on Moore River, taken away from their land, from their

mothers. Now that's true that they're underprivileged people and they should have funds to give them training, special training and an education to bring them up to the rest of the community, but that should be a separate fund provided by the government, not by the black fellows estate. And of course they're trying to do it on the cheap by charging it against the black fellow, but they don't intend to do anything for them. They're going to fiddle them, the same as they fiddled the black fellow. And this is the thing that the public are involved in and it's got nothing to do with the real problem. And that's the way they hope to keep it.

CJ. If all these stations become viable, are you thinking in terms of....What are you going to do with the cattle, are these going to be sold?

DM. Well you've got to look ahead. Now under the present conditions none of those places are viable because of....Just look back on the North West objectively, before the mineral boom come out, before we become so rich and powerful and everybody was so happy about how lucky and rich we were. The North West was a poverty stricken area. Now the cousins and uncles and brothers of the politicians were given grants of land and they had the black fellows and his land with no cost to work it; this was going to make their private fortune. Now the taxpayer was milked of money to build towns all along the North West, you've got Carnarvon, Onslow, Roebourne, Port Hedland, Broome, Derby and Wyndham, were all settled at the cost of the taxpayer. Now this is a subsidy to the North West and Kimberley squatters. There were two hundred and fifty North West and Kimberley squatters and they were subsidised by the taxpayer to set up their stations, they had the unpaid labour of the black fellows, they had the

land for virtually nothing and subsidised by the taxpayer. Now you take two items alone, you take the State Shipping Company, was established to get rid of the wool and meat from the North West and Kimberley squatters. Now for years the State ships lost four million dollars every year. I think last year they lost seven million dollars, but it's a large amount of money. We'll take four million dollars in round figures. The Kimberley meatworks, the Wyndham meatworks lost four million dollars a year. There's eight million dollars. Now you divide two hundred and fifty North West and Kimberley squatters in to eight million and that comes to thirty two thousand dollars bonus to each individual squatter family from the taxpayers alone. Now there'd be an equal amount for setting up those towns and maintaining them with roads and everything else. So you can say that those individual families had sixty thousand dollars a year from the taxpayer. Now because they never paid the black fellows any wages and the white managers only got ten dollars a week and the white workers only got five dollars a week, the only ones that got anything like real wages were the shearers who were on award rates of pay, quite high award rates. Now they come from the South with their semi-trailers, and they come up and got their cash wages and come and took them back to the metropolitan area so that they robbed the district of any virtue of them, And because they had to have this, high wages, they had a gentleman's agreement, so-called, between themselves and the squatters, and how scoundrels can have a gentleman's agreement between themselves it's very hard to imagine, but so long as they didn't let the black fellows interfere engaging in shearing, they could do what they liked with them. Well this is the only way they could get pay, because they had to have their sheep brought in cheaply or

else they couldn't pay the shearers their money. So
the black fellow was exploited for the benefit of the
squatter and shearers, that's all.

END OF SIDE TWO TAPE ONE

TAPE TWO SIDE ONE

DM. So the black fellows weren't paid any wages and the manager....see most of the squatters by this time were absentee landlords and the manager only got ten dollars a week. The black fellows got nothing. These northern districts were poverty stricken and there was nothing, there was no way of taking off, you know, they just couldn't get airborne because there was no money available. Now when the strike occurred and we got producing minerals, we were producing more minerals than, or as much minerals as the squatters were producing with wool and meat or whatever. And you'll notice as soon as the Kimberley meatworks, the Wyndham meatworks were profitable, when the Yanks started to buy our bulls and rubbish for these....what do they, they make them in US. they grind them up and.....you know the Yanks eat those bloody sausage things?

CJ. Hamburgers.

DM. Yes for making hamburgers. And it became profitable to kill these cattle, now they sold it out to private enterprise. They made all the profit, not the taxpayer who'd been paying the cost of it up to that time. So like, it doesn't matter what goes on, nobody gets the benefit of it. Now Dalgetys, Elder Smith, well Elder Smith was a South Australian firm, but Dalgetys and these other stock firms, they were overseas landlords. Now the squatter was mortgaged up to the hilt to them. They had to get their stores from them, so nobody else could come up, start in business as a storekeeper because they had to get their stores through the people that had the mortgage on their stuff. When they sold their wool they got commission on the sale of wool and they paid interest on their loan, with the result that they were always in hock to the big stock firms. So that virtually the

taxpayers of Western Australia were paying the profits to Dalgety and Co. Now is it any wonder when the statistics on our production showed that the Pilbara was a rich mineral preserve, well of course they got our rich and powerful friends to come along, so-called, and it was the natural consequence. It was quite natural, we should have been doing it all along, is to give the heritage of the people, posterity, over to these people. Now have a look [Coughs]....Do you remember the time when the....what was that report that come out when Labor was in office? Mac....not MacGregor, who was it that had a report on mineral production? [Pause] The way the multi-nationals have been allowed to take control of Australia. Up to that stage the bauxite people in Queensland and the Northern Territory, hadn't paid any income tax at all. Of course, Mount Hamersley, Mount Newman and all the iron people, they had deferred income tax because they had to pay for the railways and all the housing and all the rest of it, you know, attached to setting up a mine, mining operation. Well this was all tax deductible. And then of course they had Paraburdoo and other things, see, that they had to develop again later on. This was deferred tax, the Fitzgerald Report. Now by the time the Fitzgerald Report come out it had cost the taxpayers of Australia fifty million dollars to set these multi-nationals up in charge and give them all our minerals for ever, and it cost us fifty million pound to do it. Now how silly can you be? Now this is the mentality the colonial attitude that they've always had in the State and in the Commonwealth, because it was a British colony, well of course the British families had to be looked after. The squatters had to be looked after. It's a natural consequence now that they're giving it to overseas landlords.

CJ. It's not mining it's quarrying.

DM. Well of course it's quarrying. They're going to leave bloody great dams there, open cuts, get filled with mosquito larvae, in the middle of the desert, presently. Now this will be the heritage that we've got for our kids. Now how short-sighted can you be. Stupid!

CJ. Would you tell me more about this programme?

DM. See originally the idea was that we would provide for the desert people.

CJ. Yes.

DM. Give them the advantage of modern technology and by keeping their own cultural background and training their kids particularly in modern methods, we could give them a better chance of living in their traditional homeland with the benefit of course of integration with sympathetic whites amongst them and have a multi-national society growing up, so that those that have got the skills would come in, so long as they've got a good attitude, and we wouldn't divorce the people. Well then they'd train them in modern methods and before very long we'd have the black fellows established on their own land with the status of a successful landowner, with their own cultural background and the sympathetic technicians dispersed all amongst them and then of course as time goes on you'd build up a multi-national society that everybody could be proud of, instead of being ashamed of as we've got now. Now to that end, I've got no interest in civil social matters, I'm a miner and prospector and I'm interested in mechanics and engineering. So although I'd been forced to be interested in these social matters it's only because it was an accident of fate that I just happened to have a guilty conscience when I

found out how badly they were treated. But I'm an inventor in my own right and I've got all sorts of techniques - I've got a queer sense of humour too, I've got an ironic sense of humour and I've thought that they had such a strong case that it would be only a matter of presenting it with a united front and of course we'd just get control of their estate and we'd take it up from there. And I done a lot of work in this thing during the last thirty six years and I've got all sorts of techniques based on modern technology, that I was going to apply. With the result that the so-called most backward people in the world would suddenly come out with all the most modern, you know modern ideas, then of course we'd be the laughing stock of everybody, you know the States generally would be the laughing stock of everybody. But how ingenuous you can be, well you know, you just can't get a go, because they're so vicious and so ignorant and stupid. Now taking the long term view, there's only one people can solve the so-called native question that is the people who own the property. You don't tell the landlord how to spend his rent, you'd be out on the footpath in a fortnight. And these people are our landlords. You don't tell BHP shareholders how to spend their money. If they've got a million dollars they go over to the Lido and get mixed up with the beer cans over there where all the culture is, the same as, you know, wherever they might desecrate some other country. Now that's their business that's their money. Now these people have got an estate, an entrenched position of one per cent of the gross revenue, placed beyond the reach of Parliament. Now if you look at this, now there's twenty thousand breadwinners, lived and died, since 1897 in Western Australia. Now had they been given training, today a hundred dollars a week would be a normal, a very minimal expectation,

Now forty years of working life, if you, five thousand pounds - dollars a year, over a period of forty years, you've robbed each of these individual breadwinners to the tune of two hundred thousand dollars a year and if you multiply two hundred thousand dollars by twenty thousand, there's four thousand million dollars that they could have earned themselves, on top of the fact that they had one per cent of the gross revenue placed beyond the reach of Parliament. Now they should have been the most prosperous citizens of Australia, instead of which they're still isolated, destitute and illiterate. Now we did all sorts of research and we were all ready to go. Now had we once established ourselves with the status that being a successful group on their own land would be, then of course we've got the half caste problem again. Now you know yourself Australians are racist and it doesn't matter how prosperous these half castes might be, if they went to set themselves up in your street, they'd be flogged out of it by the Shire Council and the police and everybody else. And yet if you give the blackfellows' estate to them, they'll destroy the blackfellows as well as themselves, because they've got no culture they've got no background, they're illiterate, they're....you know they're just ambitious that's all.

CJ. This is the half castes?

DM. The half castes. So what I see is to do this job properly, if the blackfellows were once established - they're the only ones that have got the humanity and the compassion to reabsorb these half castes, but on their terms, not on the half caste's terms, because otherwise we'd all be destroyed together. And this is the future that I see it, if these people could get control and retain control of the land, then they'll take what technology suits them in the way that it suits them. And today I don't suppose there's

anybody bar myself that knows what those old lawmen wanted for their people, because the lawmen that are existing today are those that have been in missions, those that have come up under the squatters and they have been so bent and twisted that they've never been effectively in charge in the field. Like those law blokes that I discussed the problem with were in charge of their people and had been since time began and they knew exactly what they wanted to do with it. Now these blokes that are lawmen now they've got a very dim view of what they want to do. So that I'm a key man to that extent, that I could weld the thing back to where the old people wanted, but these people are doing it by instinct now, what they've got to do, the social customs, they do it by instinct and they don't know why. Now while I'm alive I've got a good chance of re-establishing those old values and the traditions that they had. Without me there'd be a very poor chance of getting that. And yet in thirty six years we've never had a halfpenny from the State, never had a halfpenny. So it's obvious that they're not interested in anything for the blackfellow. And if the Commonwealth, the people of the Commonwealth ignore the problem and continue to ignore the problem, well they'll only build us to get our own back, because after all, if they continue to go on the way they are the children are increasing at a faster rate than the whites, so that as time goes on you'll never get rid of them, there'll be a growing proportion of blackfellows through the community and if they're going to be illiterate, isolated and destitute and are going to come in as paupers, prostitutes and harlots and drunks, what's going to be the quality of Australian life, because they'll be the proportion of Australians by and by. They're going to destroy their own quality. People are short-sighted aren't they?

CJ. Compare Africa.

DM. Yes well things are different in Africa. Whereas in Africa you've got four blackfellows to one white fellow and in Rhodesia ten blackfellows to one white fellow, the position is different in Australia, you've got only one black fellow to every hundred whites. Had the proportions been in Australia, the same as they were in Africa, the blackfellows would have been free long ago, because they would have had the numbers, but they've been so thoroughly broken and this proportion, the proportion of blackfellows is so small in Australia, he could never....If you started a violent demonstration in Australia, [you would be] destroyed. So we've got to be very tactful the way we go about our business, otherwise we'd just get kicked to pieces. But at the same time what we're doing is the best thing that could happen to Australia, because they'd get rid of this shocking guilt that they're got on their conscience. You know they've got a guilty conscience going way back and it's like a physical deformity, you know, it stops them looking round at what they're doing, and it destroys their vision, it destroys their judgement. And to solve the problem they're trying to kill them the same as they back up this Daisy Bates who says they eat all the kids and all this and in fact they're eating bloody pussy cat. Now isn't this the way everybody talks about blackfellows. The missions talk about them the same way. You have a look at the Australian Inland Mission and read their booklet, well I wouldn't care to live in such a community, they're absolutely stupid, you know, they don't know up from down. A bloke I see, one bloke did his motor car in, all the big ends and main bearings went in his motor car between Fitzroy Crossing and Hall's Creek, and he got down on his bended knees and he prays to Jesus, and some bloke comes

along, repaired his motor car and put him on the road, and he thanked Christ and off he went. You know how silly can you be, what about the poor bugger that done the job? You know they're unreal. If you put a dozen of them on a desert island, they'd cut each other's throats in no time. Now you have a look at the Oombulgurri people, now the Church of England has been there for eighty years, now they were just like any other community, but the Church of England were there for eighty years and they destroyed them as human beings they turned them into animals. Now Cyril Gare's daughter did a special article in the West Australian about ten or twelve years ago, she'd come down, she'd been at Forrest River and she wrote a special article, A Day out in the Bush, and she was saying how they went out and they got bungarras and they got snakes and they got....

CJ. Shelley....

DM. Oh I don't know.

CJ. Shelley Gare.

DM. Could well be. And when they got all these things and cooked it, that was grab, you know, otherwise you wouldn't get anything. Now this was in the West Australian. Now this was a complete exposure of what the Church of England had done to these people and they'd been there for eighty years. Now I saw the final report that the.... they sent a bloke up for me to see whether they'd keep it going or whether they'd close it down. I forget how many pages of type, close type there was, about six pages. The blackfellows only got one paragraph in it. A bloke was a marine engineer and he had a lighting plant and he wouldn't let the others have any of his light. Another bloke was a mechanic and he had tools and he wouldn't let the other blokes use his tools. There was so much friction amongst the whites in the community, this is

what closed the community down. They had a....

CJ. Where was this community?

DM. This is Forrest River.

CJ. Forrest River. Oombulgurri people. They had a pump away seven miles away from the settlement, there was only one blackfellow could prime it and the others couldn't use it, they didn't know how to work it, the white fellows. They had a boat which was always broken down and they sold it to some other white fellow who sold them a barge, a diesel barge, or sold them a barge anyhow.

CJ. A barge.

DM. A barge. And the white fellow fixed this other one up and they were complaining that that boat was going right and their barge had broken down. They had two tractors one bogged in the field. Another one had the big ends out through the side of the crankshaft, they just didn't know what they were doing. And this was.....this final report. And they were going to get the son of some squatter to try and muster as many of the cattle as they could and recover as much money as they could and get out and they give the old people a chance of taking their pensions at Oombulgurri or Forrest River at the time, or go into Wyndham and that's all they got from eighty years of administration and they went in and turned them into prostitutes on the Wyndham Reserve, drunken prostitutes. Now don't you think if we had a decent law in this country that those blackfellows should be able to proceed against the Church of England for damages, for, you know, desecration of their culture and all the rest of it. If our laws were any good those people should have a case for damages against those fellows. Now there's been some mob of Yanks up there since, now that the diamonds have been found on their country now the States have taken them over again because there might

be a cash flow. Well now how silly can you be and nobody takes any notice of these things. Well I think that pretty well sews it up, umm?

CJ. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

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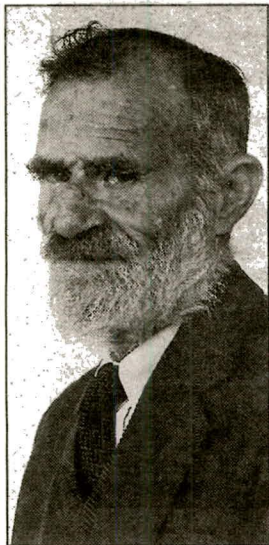
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Mr McLeod

Long Aboriginal rights fight ends

■ OBITUARY

DONALD WILLIAM McLEOD, one of the first European Australians to fight for Aboriginal rights and against exploitation, has died, aged 91.

Mr McLeod died in his South Guildford home on Tuesday after he was discharged from Royal Perth Hospital, where he had been treated for a chest infection, friend Ray Butler said yesterday.

Born in Meekatharra in 1908, Mr McLeod took up the cause of Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry in the Pilbara in the 1940s.

He saw them as grossly exploited and kept subservient.

He was one of nine children of a

gold mine owner, and worked as a prospector, well-sinker and contract worker after leaving school at 15.

It was while he was prospecting in the Pilbara in the early 1940s that he was recruited by local Aborigines to act as their representative.

"It was long before our rich and powerful friends came along," he later said. "I knew the place was rich in minerals and was keeping quiet about it. I was going to exploit it.

"Then after I ran a sick black fella into Onslow and apparently saved his life, the Aborigines decided I was the only honest bloke they'd met and asked me to help them."

The Communist Party member believed Aborigines could only get results if they took collective action.

In 1942, he addressed a meeting of more than 200 Aboriginal lawmen at Skull Springs, where he was appointed their spokesman.

The next year he protested to the then Commissioner for Native Welfare in Perth about Aboriginal station workers' conditions.

In 1946, he played a key role in organising a strike by hundreds of Aboriginal workers near Port Hedland which lasted for three years.

Mr McLeod later organised his supporters, calling them The Group. It split in the 1960s over policy but had played an important role in changing the treatment of Pilbara Aborigines.

He formed another body, Nomads Pty Ltd, which bought Strelley station, east of Port Hedland.

Although Mr McLeod was considered dogmatic, his standing remained high among Aboriginal communities in WA's north.

Mr Butler said Mr McLeod, who continued to donate most of his pension to the Strelley Pastoral Company, would eventually be recognised for championing Aboriginal rights.

"He'll be remembered as the person who dedicated his whole life to improving the way of traditional Aborigines," Mr Butler said.

During his later years, Mr McLeod continued his court battle to have a section of WA's original constitution reinstated which allowed for Aborigines to have one per cent of State revenue as compensation for "squatter occupation".