

Joe Brown







JIM BROWN (PORTA is his Aboriginal name) is a station hand. He was an adult and was working on a station when Mr Schenk first came to Laverton (W. A.) in 1920. He has done all station work including breaking horses "brumbies too, - they were sent to Perth and sold," he is an expert drover and has worked without help - this meant droving by day and watching by night to see the cattle did not go back, there was no extra pay for this.

Recently a young horse that he was riding fell with him on three occasions and rolled over on him on the last two occasions. His left arm was broken and his breast bone was injured. Strenuous movements and quick movements give him pain and make him sick. The Native Welfare Officer obtained £100 compensation for him. His arm has mended but he is not equal to the violent movements of stock work. He asks for a disability pension for himself and his wife Baku.

The Native Welfare Officer says he is not 80 per cent disabled because a white man who was similarly disabled could still earn his living in other ways, as at semi-governmental jobs - but these jobs are not available to Jim Brown who has been denied all possibility of education. The Native Welfare Department tells him to find work, but no pastoralist will employ a disabled man for stock work which is often dangerous. For stock work a man needs to be perfectly fit and not too old. Jim Brown is over sixty but cannot produce documentary evidence of his birth because as an Aborigine he was excluded from the census. The Department refuses Social Service Benefits and rations. He had no option but to beg or starve, and he cannot, like many other workers who enjoyed their work, bring himself to beg.

He was discharged from hospital on the 15th of December 1939, and dictated a letter to the Native Welfare Officer at Kalgoorlie asking him to help him to apply for sickness benefit till he gets strong and can work. He added, "I was discharged from hospital this morning but there is no work till after January.

He has had no help from any Department since the 15th of December, 1939, when he was discharged from hospital.

February 10, 1960. Jim Brown told me that he saw his former boss, Mr Nasmyth, this morning and asked him for work, but Mr Nasmyth said he could not employ him again because Jim is not strong enough to do the work now.



