

***Daily News* (Sydney), 7 February 1939, p. 1, Nazis Behind Panic. Why Aborigines Fled Camp. Colonies Aim**

Sensational developments are expected from police investigations of charges, that unrest is being deliberately fomented in aboriginal reserves.

It is alleged that the disturbances are being created to provide the German press with material to further Nazi claims for the return of colonies. Exaggerated stories have recently been appearing in German newspapers designed to show that the Australian Government is mishandling native affairs and is therefore not fit to retain the New Guinea mandate.

Panicked by rumors, including one that their children would be taken from them, about 70 aborigines have, since last Wednesday, fled from Cumeroogunga aboriginal station across the Murray River to Victoria.

Without awaiting instructions from the Aborigines Protection Board, the local police arrested an aborigine who addressed the camp last Wednesday.

He was charged with having induced the aborigines to leave the reserve, and was released on bail.

Intimidation

Lettergrams signed, "J. T. Patten. Aborigines' Progressive Association", and "W. Cooper, Australian Aborigines' League", were forwarded from Melbourne yesterday to all metropolitan-newspapers. They read:

"Aboriginal men and women and children have left Cumeroogunga reservation for Victoria due to intimidation, victimisation, and starvation. Urgently needing food: Demand immediate inquiry"

Denial

The manager of the station. Mr A. J. McQuiggan, said yesterday that these and other allegations which had been made were entirely without foundation.

It had been alleged that children were suffering from malnutrition, but the facts were that some mothers were drawing up to £3 a fortnight in child endowment.

The aborigines had left their homes after agitators had convinced them that their children would be taken from them and that they would lose their Government allowance after February 6.

They were also warned that the station would become a closed native compound.

Panic Exodus

Mr McQuiggan said that immediately he heard the native compound rumor, he communicated with the Aborigines' Protection Board in Sydney, and was told that

there was not a word of truth in it.

Despite his assurances, the natives had made a panic exodus, small parties collecting their belongings and rowing across the Murray in boats.

They were now camped on the opposite side of the stream.

“I have every sympathy for them, and their homes will be ready for them when they decide to return”, said Mr McQuiggan.

Police Attitude

The Commissioner of Police, Mr MacKay, who is chairman of the Aborigines Protection Board, said last night that the board would not tolerate agitators stirring up trouble at the reserves.

“We regard Cumeroogunga as one of our best stations, and Mr McQuiggan as one of our most efficient and sympathetic officers”, he said.

Mr A. W. Thompson, vice-president of the Aborigines' Citizenship Committee, said last night that a number of cases of fomented trouble on aboriginal reserves had been reported.

Mr. Patten, he said, did not represent any recognised aborigines' organisation.

“He has, however, received a great deal of publicity in his assumed position of president of the Aborigines' Protection Association”, said Mr Thompson.

Harsh Deal

“My committee realises that the natives have received a very harsh deal, and is demanding, with the support of the ALP and the industrial movement, rectification of the position. “But It will not lend Itself to any activities that will jeopardise its opportunities to carry out the objective of full citizenship for the natives”.