

SOCIAL RELATIONS DURING THE AMERICAN  
OCCUPATION OF AUSTRALIA

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE OF NECESSITY:  
SOCIAL RELATIONS DURING THE AMERICAN  
OCCUPATION OF AUSTRALIA, 1941-1945

By

JOHN MCKERROW, B.A. (HONS), M.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

© Copyright by John McKerrow, July 2008

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2008)  
(History)

McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE:               Scenes from a Marriage of Convenience: Social  
Relations During the American Occupation of Australia,  
1941-1945

AUTHOR:           John McKerrow, B.A. Honours (Windsor), M.A.  
(McMaster)

SUPERVISOR:    Professor John C. Weaver

NUMBER OF PAGES:  viii, 341

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the presence of American military personnel in Australia during the Second World War. Around one million US soldiers spent some time in the country. This American occupation resulted in several areas of tension between US military personnel and Australian civilians. Areas of conflict, that have hitherto received little attention from historians, are examined in this dissertation. Jurisdictional and policing disputes between the US military and Queensland officials, American criminal behaviour, and problems between Australian labourers and American authorities are all examined. Other “fault lines,” such as race and gender relations, which have been looked at by other historians, are also examined; this thesis provides new insights into these areas. How senior authorities on both sides managed crises and coordinated efforts to manage relations between civilians and GIs are also studied. Sexual relations were directed towards certain associations (prostitution), whilst other associations (marriage) were discouraged. Authorities increased efforts to manage interracial sexual relations, as both countries had a history of discouraging and even outlawing miscegenation. Ultimately, this thesis argues that problems between American personnel and Australians during the occupation did not threaten to upset the war effort or the alliance between the United States and Australia, but there were everyday problems between allies and concurrent efforts to manage relations in the context of a global war.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I must first thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. John Weaver, for his guidance and support throughout the writing of this dissertation. His suggestions and comments were invaluable. I am also grateful to Dr. Martin Horn and Dr. Karen Balcom for their commentary and advice. The staff members of the Queensland State Archives, the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, the MacArthur Memorial Archives, the National Archives of Australia, and the Queensland Police Museum provided me with a great deal of assistance during the research process. This dissertation would have been impossible without the financial assistance of McMaster University and the Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program. My parents also provided me with support for which I am grateful. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Kristin. I would not have been able to complete this work without your patience, love, and support. I dedicate this thesis to you.

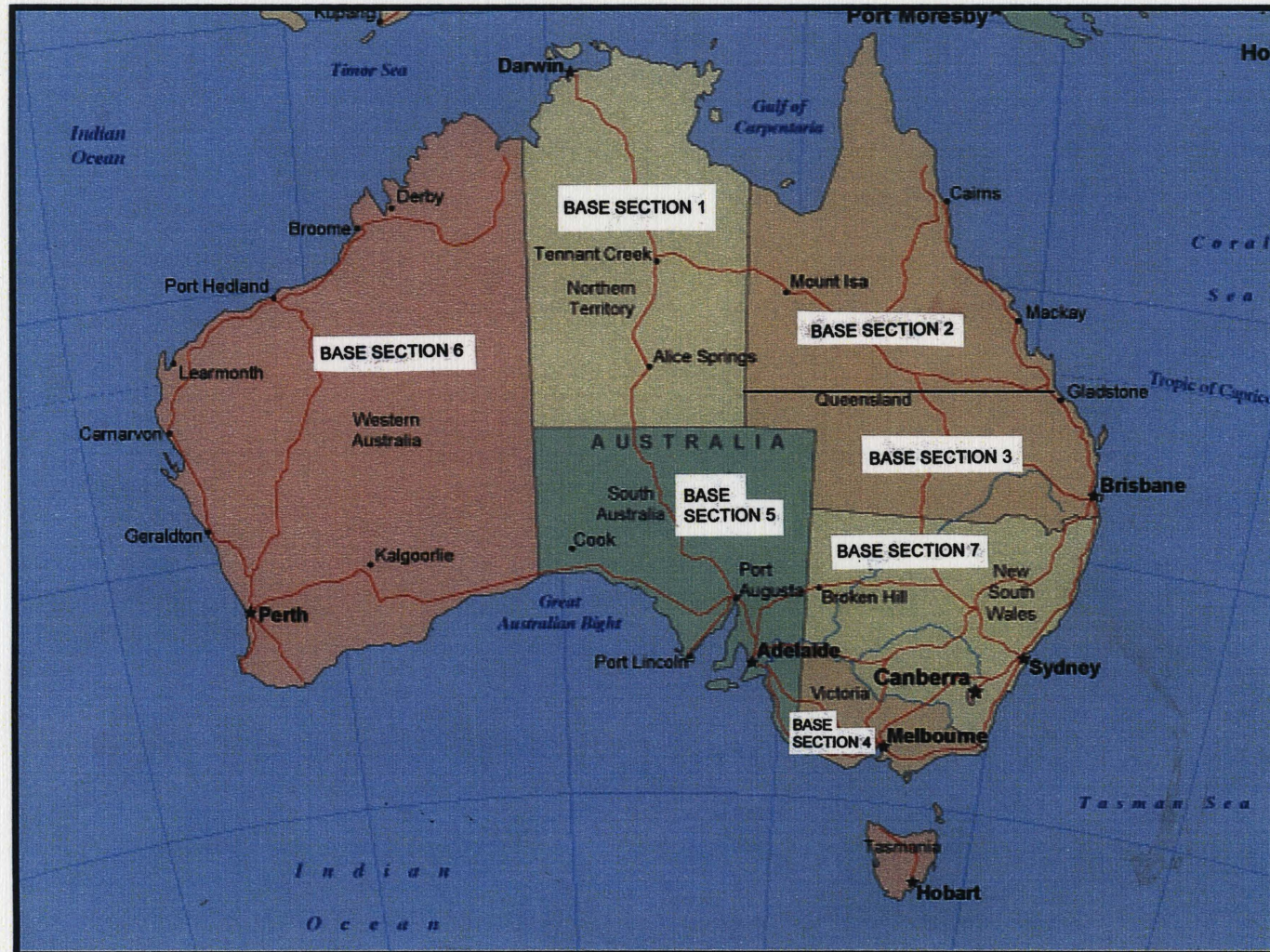
## CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Maps	vi
Introduction	1
1. Defining Boundaries and Protecting our Boys: Jurisdictional and Policing Disputes	20
2. Managing Sexual Relations in Wartime: American Soldiers and Australian Women	81
3. A New Boss in Town: Uncle Sam as Employer	146
4. White Australia Encounters Black America: Race Relations	208
5. Protecting One's Own: Crime, Manpower, and American Presumption	265
Conclusion	324
Selected Bibliography	336



## MAP 1

### UNITED STATES ARMY BASE SECTIONS IN AUSTRALIA



Source  
<http://www.map-of-australia.us/>



**MAP 2**  
**QUEENSLAND**

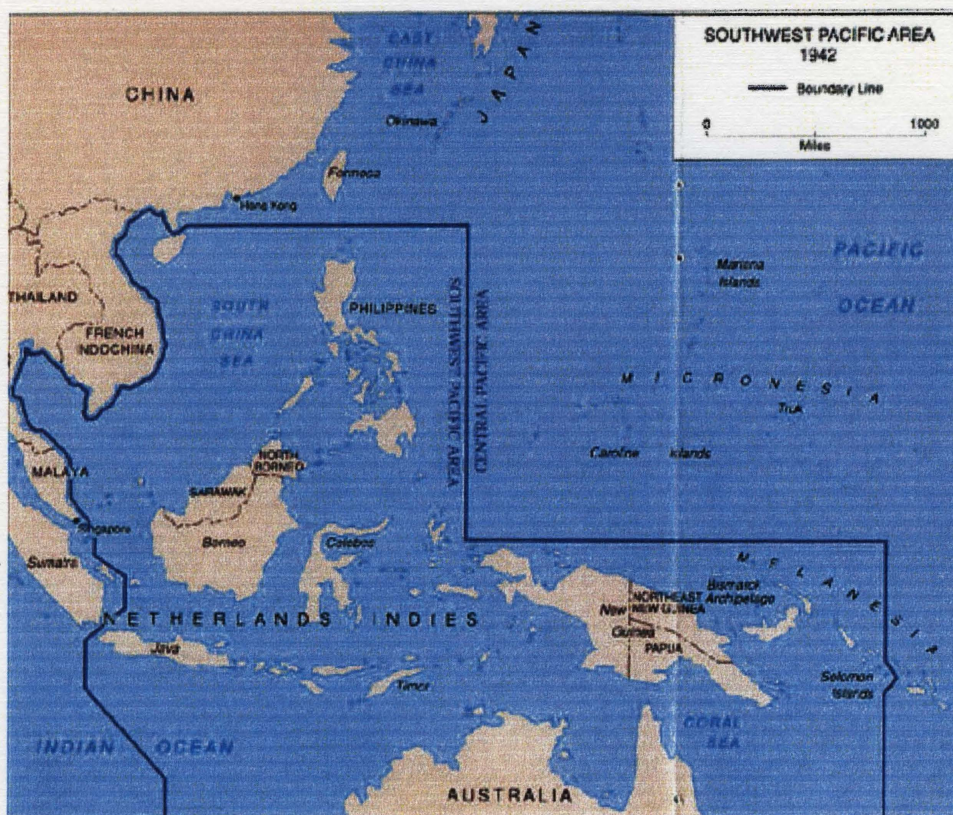


Source

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/pacific/australia/queensland/>



**MAP 3**  
**SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA**



Source

<http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/topics/philippine/images/swpa-map-1942-m.jpg>

## INTRODUCTION

This study of the relations between the civilian authorities of one country – Australia – and the military authorities of an allied country – the United States of America – focuses on broad areas of tension between friends. Partly inspired by David Reynolds's seminal work *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain 1942-45*, this dissertation examines relations between American servicemen and Australian civilians. How authorities on both sides attempted to manage these associations through the prism of national loyalties, military *esprit de corps*, fraught US and Australian racial histories, and the desire to prosecute the war efficiently is another part of this study. This dissertation is not concerned with the wider war (save for how it affected relations in Australia) or for the most part associations between American and Australian service personnel. How Diggers and GIs interacted has been covered by historians elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

Later in this introduction, there will be a discussion of how surviving documentary evidence can skew an understanding of wartime relations in this direction. Despite the incomplete representation of relations that comes from concentrating on troubles, friction between allies over matters unrelated to the conduct of the war reveals general points about allies and armies. Societies that share many common values and the same cause are not free from disputes. Disputes disclose reluctance on the part of both

---

<sup>1</sup> For an examination of GI-Digger relations see E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under: The American Impact on Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985); John Hammond Moore, *Over-sexed, Over-paid, and Over Here: Americans in Australia, 1941-1945* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981); Peter Thompson and Robert Macklin, *The Battle of Brisbane: Australians and Yanks at War* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2000); Darryl McIntyre, "Paragons of Glamour: A Study of U.S. Military Forces in Australia" (PhD dissertation., University of Queensland, 1989).

parties to yield certain established practices, customs, and values in order to achieve a harmonious war effort. As well, because the American forces were overwhelmingly comprised of young men, troubles between the best of allies often stemmed from male misconduct and posturing. To some extent, the nature of the war in the Southwest Pacific and several related American policies – the lack of cultural programmes and the swift removal to combat areas of men in trouble – exacerbated points of friction. Before these themes are developed further and the contributions of this thesis in relation to previous examinations of the wartime relationship between Australia and the United States are laid out, it is helpful to review some fundamentals about the war in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA). The tempo of the war affected policies towards civilians and military relations as well as the very nature of interpersonal relations between American service personnel and Australians.

Events in the wider Pacific War necessitated the American occupation of Australia. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor and Japanese attacks elsewhere in the Southwest Pacific, Australia's strategic significance in the Southwest Pacific increased. Even before Pearl Harbor, the Americans were using Australian airbases to ferry aeroplanes to the Philippines, but it was not until after December 7 1941 that Washington began to see Australia's potential as a supply base for US forces.<sup>2</sup> The first major contingent of Americans to reach Australia, the hastily constituted Task Force South Pacific (TFSP), was originally destined to travel directly to the Philippines and was only redirected to Australia after Pearl Harbor. On 22 December 1941, the convoy,

---

<sup>2</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 6.



comprising of 4,600 personnel, reached Brisbane with the goal of reinforcing and re-supplying General Douglas MacArthur's forces in the Philippines.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout December 1941 and January 1942, American forces in Australia continued to have as their chief goal the reinforcement of MacArthur's beleaguered troops. However, as the American position in the Philippines deteriorated, "emphasis shifted increasingly to the defense of Australia and its development as the main U.S. Army base in the area."<sup>4</sup> Events outside Australia continued to dictate its importance to allied strategy. As the unit history of the United States Army Forces in Australia (USAFIA) states

[b]y the end of February 1942 the whole strategic pattern in [the Southwest Pacific] had changed. In the Philippines, American troops under General MacArthur were fighting gallantly to hold their position on Bataan and Corregidor but by this time it was clear that their resistance could not last indefinitely and that as a base for operations the Philippines were virtually lost to the Allies. The Netherlands East Indies were almost entirely in Japanese hands; all U.S. troops that could withdraw had returned to Australia.<sup>5</sup>

With the Japanese advancing virtually everywhere, Australia became the main base of operations and supply for the US army in the Pacific.<sup>6</sup> Confirming the country's newfound strategic significance was the establishment of MacArthur's headquarters in Melbourne in March 1942.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Bykofsky and Harold Larson, *United States Army in World War II, The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1957), 426; "Establishment of Headquarters USAFIA at Melbourne, Australia," [no date], National Archives and Records Administration II (NARA) (College Park), RG 496, Entry 47, Box 326, File: Establishment of Headquarters USAFIA at Melbourne, Australia, 1,10.

<sup>4</sup> Bykofsky, *United States Army*, 426.

<sup>5</sup> "Establishment of Headquarters USAFIA at Melbourne, Australia," [no date], National Archives and Records Administration II (NARA) (College Park), RG 496, Entry 47, Box 326, File: Establishment of Headquarters USAFIA at Melbourne, Australia, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Bykofsky, *United States Army*, 426.

<sup>7</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 10.



The naval battles of Coral Sea and Midway in May and June 1942 ended any chance of a Japanese invasion of Australia (which was reflected by MacArthur's decision to move his headquarters to Brisbane in July), and allowed the Americans to consolidate and build up their position. From a force of only 25,000 US troops in March 1942, MacArthur had nearly 100,000 GIs under his command in the country by July.<sup>8</sup> It was during this period that Australia's chief role in the broader war in the Southwest Pacific Area was to act as a supply base to reinforce Australian and American troops fighting the Japanese in Papua New Guinea. As MacArthur recounted in his *Reminiscences*, the decision to fight the Japanese stationed on New Guinea "involved provision for supply and reinforcement of advanced areas from rear bases in Australia which were in large part merely ports for the reshipping of material from the distant West Coast of the United States."<sup>9</sup> It was not until the middle of January 1943 that the combined American-Australian forces were able to defeat the last Japanese redoubt at Sanananda and secure the southeastern portion of the island.<sup>10</sup> At nearly the same time, American forces won their six-month seesaw battle of attrition against the Japanese at Guadalcanal.<sup>11</sup>

After taking Sanananda, Allied forces in Papua enjoyed a period of rest and consolidation. In June 1943, they renewed their assault on Japanese positions in New Guinea and converged on Japanese held Salamaua and Lae. By September, both locations were in Allied hands; a month later, the Japanese garrison at Finschhafen fell to

---

<sup>8</sup> Moore, *Over-sexed, Over-paid, and Over Here*, 70, 84.

<sup>9</sup> Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1964), 154.

<sup>10</sup> Dan van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign, World War II, The U.S – Japanese War 1941-1945* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), 207.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

Australian troops.<sup>12</sup> In December 1943 and January 1944, Allied troops continued to roll back Japanese forces on the northern coast of the island and in the interior.<sup>13</sup> One should also remember that American forces enjoyed gains elsewhere. Japan's garrison at Bougainville was reduced to inconsequence by the end of 1943, and the major naval and air base at Rabaul was isolated and under constant Allied air attack by April 1944.<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of this brief outline of the Pacific War is to not only explain why the Americans were in Australia in the first place, but also to provide some context to the American troop numbers in Australia during the war (chart I:1). US troops under MacArthur constantly "flowed through" Australia to New Guinea, but 1943 represented the peak presence of American troops stationed in the country. As Allied positions in Papua were secured in January 1943 and the conquest of New Guinea continued during that year, Australia's strategic importance as a supply base for the fighting forces in the SWPA diminished. This diminution is reflected in the number of US army personnel stationed in Australia from 1943-44. From a high of nearly 120,000 troops in September 1943, the number was cut in half within six months. By the end of 1944, there were fewer than 24,000 US army personnel stationed in the whole of Australia and that number dwindled to 14,700 by March 1945.

Further buttressing Australia's diminished importance to Allied strategy was New Guinea's increased importance as a supply hub and staging ground by the beginning of 1944. As John Hammond Moore notes in *Over-sexed, Over-paid, and Over Here*, Milne

---

<sup>12</sup> Harry A. Gailey, *The War in the Pacific, From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 224-26.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 236, 244-246.

Bay became known as “Little Detroit,” as soldiers assembled seven hundred vehicles a month “for use in forward areas, which saved shipment to Australia for assembly there.”<sup>15</sup> Oro Bay, on New Guinea’s north coast, saw over 730,000 troops pass through in January 1944 alone.<sup>16</sup> Symbolic of these changes in Australia’s importance was the fact that MacArthur, in preparation for the invasion of the Philippines, moved his headquarters from Brisbane to Hollandia, on New Guinea’s north coast, in August 1944. The general moved his headquarters there after a series of amphibious landings on the western half of the island had destroyed the Japanese as a fighting force on the island.<sup>17</sup>

Chart I:1 presents a reasonable picture of the flow-through of American personnel; however, it is important to note that it only refers to US Army and United States Army Air Force<sup>18</sup> personnel stationed in Australia, whether service or combat units. The United States Navy (USN) also had a considerable presence in Australia.

According to E. Daniel and Annette Potts:

USN facilities included two hospitals in Townsville; a naval air station at Great Palm Island; a PT boat installation at Cairns; a naval air station, as well as a submarine maintenance and repair base, at Brisbane; a maintenance and repair base for escort vessels at Sydney; and in Western Australia, besides those in or near Perth, a patrol base for flying-boats and a submarine-refuelling depot at Exmouth Gulf. Naval personnel stationed in Australia, apart from those aboard visiting ships, peaked at 14,300 in December 1943.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Moore, *Over-sexed, Over-paid, and Over Here*, 264.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Gailey, *The War in the Pacific*, 286.

<sup>18</sup> The United States Army Air Force was a part of the US Army until 1947.

<sup>19</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 27.

These numbers do not take into account the hundreds of ships that visited Australia during the war. Over 170 military vessels docked at ports in South Queensland alone.<sup>20</sup> Elements of the US Marine Corps, comprising of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, also spent some time training and recuperating in Queensland and Victoria after Guadalcanal. The division left Australia in September 1943 to join US forces in New Guinea.<sup>21</sup> Other American servicemen also visited Australia on furlough or stopped in the country for a few days or weeks before being shipped to the battle zones north of Australia.<sup>22</sup> Although not part of this study because the American presence was overwhelmingly male, it is worth noting that a small number of American women came to Australia, as part of the Women's Army Corps, the American Red Cross, and the Army Nurse Corps.<sup>23</sup> All told, around one million US servicemen passed through Australia, a country of only seven million inhabitants, during the war.<sup>24</sup>

The American presence was not spread uniformly across Australia (Chart I:1). The USAFIA, which later became the United States Army Services of Supply (USASOS) in April 1942, divided Australia into seven base sections for administrative purposes (Map 1). The initial four sections were created in January 1942. Base Section One, headquartered at Birdum and later Darwin comprised the Northern Territory; Base Section Two included Queensland north of Rockhampton; Base Section Three was Queensland south of Rockhampton (including the town itself); Base Section Four

---

<sup>20</sup> Peter Charlton, *South Queensland WWII, 1941-45* (Bowen Hill, Queensland: Boolarong Publications, 1991), 35-36.

<sup>21</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 28, 62.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 31, 108, 109.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-30.

comprised Victoria, and Melbourne was the location of MacArthur's headquarters until July 1942. The Americans also created base sections in Perth, Western Australia (Base Section Six) and Adelaide, South Australia (Base Section Five) in March 1942. These areas ceased operations in January 1943. However, Base Section Five was reconstituted in September 1943 around Cairns. Base Section Seven, created in April 1942, was comprised of all New South Wales, but in practicality, all US personnel were stationed in Sydney. The city was used as a supply depot, a furlough location, and the headquarters of the USASOS.<sup>25</sup> The majority of US troops stationed in Australia were in Queensland for geographical reasons: proximity to New Guinea and the presence of relatively large ports at Brisbane, Townsville, and Cairns. As Raymond Evans notes in his work *A History of Queensland*, the state's "global positioning was pivotal. It was to become the staging-zone for the South-west Pacific War."<sup>26</sup> In June 1943, sixty-seven percent of all troops stationed in Australia were in the state; those figures climbed to eighty percent in September 1943 and nearly ninety percent in December 1943.<sup>27</sup> These numbers help explain why so many of the problems, incidents, and causes of friction during the war occurred in Queensland.

This thesis dwells on conflicts, but recognizes that relationships were more diverse than unpleasant incidents show. Nevertheless, Australians viewed the American occupation in a number of ways; some certainly resented the conduct of American personnel. Australian social activist and feminist Jessie Street remembered that "[a]fter

---

<sup>25</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 27-28; "Establishment of Headquarters USAFIA at Melbourne, Australia," [no date], National Archives and Records Administration II (NARA) (College Park), RG 496, Entry 47, Box 326, File: Establishment of Headquarters USAFIA at Melbourne, Australia.

<sup>26</sup> Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 187.

<sup>27</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 30.

awhile, we began to realize that to the average white American, if you were not one of them, whatever your colour, you were regarded as a native and could be treated by them as such. Gradually we accepted it all as part of the horror of war in our country.”<sup>28</sup> Hers was an extremely negative appraisal of the American occupation which contrasts with the reminiscences of another Australian woman, Maureen Meadows, who worked for the American forces during the war. Looking back at the war, Meadows declared that

there were so many things about them to love. I loved their looks and their ways and the casual manner in which they gave away so generously of their cigarette ration...But most of all I loved the way they said “Ma’am!”...And whether it was because of the way they looked at you while they did, you felt as if you were the one and only woman in their life who really mattered – for the moment anyhow.<sup>29</sup>

Were GIs dashing and generous heroes or arrogant allies? Australians saw GIs through both lenses and many more: they were saviours from the Japanese, lovers, husbands, generous employers, and the exotic “other” (especially black Americans). Conversely, Americans were also home-wreckers, demanding and uncompromising employers, criminals, and racists. How the Americans were perceived, as saviours or sinners, really depended on individual Australians.

In his study of the American occupation of Britain, Reynolds notes that most military historians have ignored soldiers as human beings and have instead focused on strategy, tactics, and generals. When speaking of the American occupation of Britain, Reynolds argues that “[o]nly by taking seriously high politics and real life can their [soldiers’] experiences be understood.”<sup>30</sup> This argument applies equally to the Americans

---

<sup>28</sup> Jessie M.G. Street, *Truth or Repose* (Sydney: Australian Book Society, 1966), 225.

<sup>29</sup> Maureen C. Meadows, *I Loved Those Yanks* (Sydney: George M. Dash, 1948), 14.

<sup>30</sup> David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-45* (London: Phoenix Press, 1996), xxviii.

in Australia. In a study that is concerned chiefly with relations between Australian civilians, minor civil servants, local labour leaders, magistrates and constables on one hand and junior American officers and GIs on the other, one might ask how does high policy fit in? Simply, those at the top of the pyramid, those who wielded authority over Australians and American servicemen, such as General Douglas MacArthur, senior military officers, Prime Minister John Curtin, senior civil servants, and labour leaders are not ignored. However, they factor into this examination largely within the context of managing and controlling relations between GIs and Australian civilians. Their place in this story is largely one of crisis management, although their contribution to tense relations is also examined. The policies they laid down and decisions they made to manage relations, reduce friction, temper resentments and sometimes minimize contact between GIs and Australians is a recurring theme of this work. The remarkable fact is that in the midst of war, the “top brass” dealt with an extraordinary array of problems that originated between GIs and civilians. How those at the bottom of the pyramid responded to policy (and in some cases ignored it) is another theme examined in this dissertation.

This study focuses on the problems, crises, and tensions that resulted from the American presence. Here one may ask, why make these areas the focus? Where is the co-operation between Australians and Americans? One should first state that relations for the most part were good; friendships were made and there was a great deal of co-operation. These features have been examined by other historians.<sup>31</sup> One should also realize that there were no major disruptions or conflicts during the occupation. The so-

---

<sup>31</sup> See Potts, *Yanks Down Under*; Moore, *Over-sexed, Over-paid, and Over Here*; Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), chap 7.

called Battle of Brisbane, where a few thousand GIs and Diggers rioted and fought on 26 November 1942 (leaving one Australian private dead) was the worst incident of the war.<sup>32</sup> Neither does this dissertation eschew co-operation totally; areas where the interests of American and Australian officials overlapped and the generally good relations between black GIs and Australian civilians are examined. The particularly cordial relations between General MacArthur and Prime Minister Curtin are also born out by this study. Finally, some problems, relations between black GIs and Australian women for example, were not problems per se. They were simply aspects of real life. For instance, marriage was a happy occasion for American grooms and Australian brides; the same could not be said for those in authority. Such actions created problems and officialdom made efforts and instituted policies to discourage weddings.

There are several reasons for concentrating on areas of conflict. First, certain aspects of the American occupation, such as policing disputes, labour relations, and American crime have not been looked at or have been examined superficially. Another reason why this dissertation focuses on problems and crises is because Australian authorities or the American military sometimes inflated episodes into incidents requiring official management. These incidents are illustrative as they provide insight into the behaviour of GIs. Finally, primary sources tend to focus on the negative rather than the positive – if relations are going along smoothly there is little reason to file a report. This is particularly true of the files of the Queensland State Police, of which this dissertation makes extensive use. Similarly, material from the US National Archives relating to the

---

<sup>32</sup> See Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, chap. 17.



General Headquarters Southwest Pacific Area and the MacArthur Memorial Archives are skewed towards painting a negative picture of relations. Despite these potential pitfalls, these sources provide new insights into areas of tension and conflict. As long as one realizes that relations were generally sound and that there were examples of co-operation, the “imbalance” of these sources can be negated.

This study takes Reynolds’s work as its inspiration, but it is different in many ways. It examines some facets of the American occupation of Australia that were not closely examined in the British context, such as crime, jurisdictional and policing disputes, and problems with labour unions and hiring practices. Furthermore, the theatres of operations themselves were extremely different which of course produced different occupations. Whereas the American occupation of Britain was, for the most part, a steady build up of troops (eventually reaching 1.65 million on the eve of D-Day), events in the Pacific had a distinct trajectory.<sup>33</sup> The Japanese and the Allies were constantly engaged after Pearl Harbor, and the latter’s position in the Southwest Pacific was precarious for much of 1942. Consequently, in the SWPA, there was a steady flow of troops through Australia to battle zones primarily in New Guinea.<sup>34</sup>

These dissimilarities in respective occupations produced varying policies when it came to managing relations. British and American officials instituted both negative policies (reducing friction by reducing contact) and positive policies (billeting of US troops in British homes, personnel exchanges, and so forth) in order to promote

---

<sup>33</sup> American troop numbers did drop in Britain from roughly 228,000 to just over 100,000 because of Operation Torch. See Reynolds, *Rich Relation*, esp. chap. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 27-30.

friendship and understanding between GIs and Britons.<sup>35</sup> The Americans in Australia did not adopt similar policies. There were some measures taken to separate GIs and Diggers, to segregate black and white American troops, and a few units found civilian billets in the first months of the occupation, but there was little effort to take the positive approach.<sup>36</sup> At the beginning of 1943, MacArthur rejected outright requests to institute measures (such as an educational lecture series) that Australian officialdom hoped would counteract “[d]ifferences in outlook which are to be expected in bodies of men drawn from widely separated countries, each with its own national ideals and economy.”<sup>37</sup> Although he agreed that friendly relations were important, MacArthur believed that “the best results will be obtained by informal means, with each service working through its own channels to control the very small number of unruly individuals who create difficulties.”<sup>38</sup> When explaining his position, MacArthur told Australian General Thomas Blamey of the GI’s natural allergy to lectures and propaganda.<sup>39</sup> Privately, senior US officers also cited the lack of qualified officers to implement such a policy. The fact that US troops stationed in Australia were “widely scattered and engaged in administrative jobs,” made their assembly “to attend such lectures a hindrance to the work they [were] doing.”<sup>40</sup> Thus, the scattered nature of the American occupation and the unwillingness of

---

<sup>35</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, xxix, chap. 12.

<sup>36</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 43

<sup>37</sup> General T.A. Blamey to General MacArthur, 28 January 1943, MacArthur Archives, RG 4, Reel 586.

<sup>38</sup> Douglas MacArthur to General Blamey, 12 February 1943, MacArthur Archives, RG 4, Reel 586.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> General R.J. Marshall to Assistant Chief of Staff, G.H.Q. Southwest Pacific Area, 14 December 1942, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 306, File: 336.

American commanders meant that there was no real programme of cultural awareness for US personnel.

This ignorance of Australian culture sometimes led to a lack of respect. Moreover, MacArthur established a policy that, when it came to managing relations in Australia, practiced decentralization and often left discretion to local commanders. This is one reason why problems and efforts to reach agreements were often isolated to individual base sections and were not Australia-wide. Furthermore, this policy of decentralization explains why it was only when crises became serious or threatened to hurt the war effort that senior officials became involved. Because there was no programme to educate GIs about their hosts, US military policy when it came to managing relations was often reactive. In most cases, the Americans made no attempt to eliminate tension before it started; US military authorities muddled along and tried to solve problems and alleviate tensions as they came.

This study is also different from other works that have examined the American occupation of Australia. One should first realize that there are surprisingly few works on the subject. Academic studies have tended to focus narrowly on the experiences of African American troops or sexual relations.<sup>41</sup> One exception to this rule is Daryl

---

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of the presence of black Americans see Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon 'Jim Crow Down-under? African American Encounters with White Australia, 1942-1945', *Pacific Historical Review* 71 (No. 4 2002): 607-632; Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor 'The Reception of Black Servicemen in Australia During World War II: The Resilience of White Australia', *Journal of Black Studies* 25 (January 1995): 331-348; Kay Saunders, 'In a Cloud of Lust: Black GIs and Sex in World War II' in Joy Damousi & Marylin Lake (eds.) *Gender and War: Australia at War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989). For a discussion of sexual relations see Michael Sturma, "Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942-1945," *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 24 (May 1989): 3-17 and Michael Sturma, "Public Health and Sexual Morality: Venereal Disease in World War II Australia," *Signs* 13:4 (Summer, 1988): 725-40.

McIntyre's dissertation "'Paragons of Glamour': A study of the United States military forces in Australia, 1942- 1945." Whilst McIntyre provides a comprehensive account of the American presence, he does not focus on relations between Australian civilians and American personnel or efforts by American and Australian authorities to manage relations. His study also deals with the entertainment of GIs, the organization of the USASOS, and relations between GIs and Diggers. McIntyre uses the files of the Queensland State Police but not to a great degree. In contrast, this study makes extensive use of these files as well as the considerable material relating to the General Headquarters Southwest Pacific Area found in the US National Archives.<sup>42</sup> This dissertation, I believe, is the first to mine this portion of the American archives.

Other monographs of the occupation have been popular histories like John Hammond Moore's *Over-sexed, Over-paid, and Over Here* and Peter Thompson and Robert Macklin's *The Battle of Brisbane: Australians and Yanks at War*. Both books are entertaining, but relations between American soldiers and civilians are not their only focus. They are as concerned with the wider war, relations between Diggers and GIs, and events outside of Australia as they are with GI-civilian relations. As one critic notes, Moore "does not tell what it was like to be an ordinary American or ordinary Australian in wartime Australia."<sup>43</sup> Moreover, neither work has much to say about efforts to manage relations. A more complete and scholarly, but still popular, effort is E. Daniel and Annette Potts's *Yanks Down Under*, which looks at real life within an overarching

---

<sup>42</sup> RG 495 of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is devoted to the GHQ Southwest Pacific Area.

<sup>43</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, xviii.

narrative. Their work offers a flavour of the times, describing what GIs thought of Australia, relations between GIs and women, the experiences of black servicemen, and tensions between GIs and Diggers. Still, *Yanks Down Under* does not examine American crime, labour problems, and jurisdictional and policing disputes in any great depth. When reading this book, one might get the impression that these areas hold little significance within the context of American – Australian relations. Furthermore, much of their book consists of reminiscences, stories of individuals, and some chapters look at post war Australia. *Yanks Down Under* also attempts to measure the impact of American presence on Australian society; a noble effort, however, it is beyond the ambit of this study.

The reader may wonder why the term occupation is used throughout this study; after all, we are not discussing France under the Wehrmacht. First, some Australians saw the American presence as an occupation and described it so publicly.<sup>44</sup> The Americans were similarly criticized as occupiers in the British context, most notably by George Orwell. Furthermore, the term suggests, as Reynolds notes, that the Americans had something in common with other armies on foreign soil. Referring to the American presence as an occupation helps us see GIs as not just Americans but also as *soldiers*.<sup>45</sup> It is also important to keep in mind what kind of GIs were in Australia. These were, after all, largely conscripts who had been drafted into the army unwillingly. Conscripts created their own set of problems, as Reynolds states:

inside every soldier is a civilian trying to escape. The schizophrenic duality of army-crowd and soldier-civilian has been a central problem for every military commander throughout history. Yet it is particularly pressing for modern mass-conscript armies,

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>45</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, xxviii.

in which soldiers are not professionals but civilians temporarily denied their civilian status and rights. And countries where there is no peacetime conscription find it even harder to habituate the civilian to the shocks of military life.<sup>46</sup>

Seeing the GIs as both Americans and unwilling conscripts goes a long way to understanding their behaviour, which created a host of problems for Australian and American authorities. Understanding why GIs acted the way they did, what problems their presence created, and how authorities dealt with these problems is another purpose of this dissertation.

Another factor that helps explain relations between US personnel and Australian civilians is the (obvious) fact that the Americans were different from their hosts. This is also a story of two peoples who were brought suddenly into contact. Both had their own histories, cultures, and national loyalties. Australians and Americans might have been allies and some individuals shared the same Anglo-Celtic cultural and ethnic roots, but they nevertheless saw each other as different, indeed thought, and acted differently. Americans and Australians also suffered from a great ignorance of one other. Potts and Potts are correct to say that the “Americans knew nothing much about Australia: like many still, they might confuse it with Austria and therefore be surprised that the people spoke English...Australians, on the other hand, often had a distorted view, mainly acquired through the cinema, of Americans and their country.”<sup>47</sup> What this meant for GI-civilian relations was that Australians sometimes viewed their guests as the “other,” and Americans found Australians alien. Both sides found it difficult to appreciate the other’s customs, beliefs, and habits, which created tension and resentment. Finally, national

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>47</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, xvi.

loyalties and indeed *esprit de corps* among GIs sometimes bubbled to the surface and strained relations, especially with regard to jurisdictional and policing disputes and criminal acts on the part of American servicemen. Nevertheless, when both sides shared the same social attitudes, with regard to race and gender relations for example, there was a great deal of co-operation.

Taken together, the constant “flow through” of troops, the decentralization of the American command, the lack of any real programme of cultural awareness, national loyalties, the nature of mass conscript armies, and mutual ignorance accentuated tensions along a set of basic fault lines: jurisdiction, gender, labour, race relations, and crime. This dissertation examines these fault lines and how authorities on both sides attempted to alleviate tension, solve problems, and manage relations whilst trying to win the war. Chapter one of this dissertation examines jurisdictional and policing disputes between state police and American MPs and shore patrolmen. Chapter two considers sex relations between GIs and Australian women; authorities on both sides tried to manage these associations. The United States as an employer of Australians is the focus of chapter three; the Americans’ sometimes fractious relations with Australian unions are also examined. The unique experiences of African American troops is considered in chapter four; here the study digresses slightly with a brief examination of relations between black GIs and white American military authorities. Other historians have examined these relations; however, this study challenges some of the existing historiography. Furthermore, some aspects of these relations have not been looked at closely before in the Australian context, such as the white fear of black mutinies and low morale. This

discussion not only provides necessary background, but it helps explain why African Americans had so much interaction with white Australians. Why white Australians treated black GIs surprisingly well, given Australian history, is the main thrust of the chapter, however, areas of friction are also examined. Finally, chapter five explores the crimes that American servicemen committed whilst in Australia, why they occurred, what they meant for relations, and how officials dealt with them.



## **CHAPTER ONE – DEFINING BOUNDARIES AND PROTECTING OUR BOYS: JURISDICTIONAL AND POLICING DISPUTES**

When the American garrisoning of Australia began in December 1941, the issue of legal jurisdiction did not at first figure prominently. The seemingly inexorable Japanese advance and the threat of invasion eclipsed whatever concerns existed about who would have legal jurisdiction over US personnel in Australia. When it became clear in early 1942 that the US presence in Australia would be prolonged and as more servicemen arrived in the country, the question of who would police the Americans and adjudicate their crimes needed an answer. Historically armies have exercised many functions that are usually within the purview of civil authorities; senior officers have been largely responsible for policing, adjudicating cases, and punishing personnel. However, when the Americans arrived in Australia, jurisdictional boundaries were not clear-cut. Australia, being a friendly host country, could have exercised jurisdiction in cases where American servicemen broke Australian laws or committed crimes against Australian civilians outside military establishments. This did not happen; US military authorities not only enjoyed jurisdiction in cases where their servicemen committed crimes against each other, but they also had jurisdiction when their men broke Australian laws and perpetrated crimes against Australian citizens when off base. American military officials had full extra-territorial legal jurisdiction over their personnel. This is not entirely surprising, given that there were historical precedents to this arrangement. The principle of the host government granting extra-territorial jurisdiction to foreign armies had been recognized in international law by the twentieth century, especially in Europe.

Moreover, during the First World War, both American and British forces (of which the Australians were a part) “had been allowed to exercise exclusive courts-martial jurisdiction over the misconduct of their soldiers” in France.<sup>1</sup>

How the American and Australian authorities came to demarcate jurisdictional boundaries and how the former came to enjoy extra-territorial jurisdiction will be dealt with briefly in this chapter. We will see that even after Australian and American authorities formulated a policy that spelled out jurisdictional ambits, problems occurred. At first glance, the episodes themselves may appear to be much ado about nothing; however, they are significant for several reasons. The American military found itself embroiled in jurisdictional disputes with Australian civil authorities in Queensland, which created friction and strained relations in a state where the scale of the American presence meant that goodwill would be useful. The incidents that set off the disputes also offer a glimpse of how individual Americans occasionally perceived themselves being beyond the bounds of Australian law. They saw themselves as *soldiers* fighting a war; Australian law and the concerns of the local population took on a secondary importance if they were considered at all. Some American personnel simply ignored local laws and customs, which suggests there is some truth to Jessie Street’s observation that Americans saw Australians simply as “natives” and as such treated them poorly.<sup>2</sup> In response to American indifference and even arrogance, Australians pushed back by escalating jurisdictional grievances. Policies negotiated and formulated from above were

---

<sup>1</sup> David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain 1942-1945* (London: Phoenix Press, 1996), 145.

<sup>2</sup> Jessie M.G. Street, *Truth or Repose* (Sydney: Australian Book Society, 1966), 225.

misunderstood, tested to the limits, or deliberately ignored by local authorities. There might have been a war on, but in the eyes of a number of Queensland officials that did not give GIs carte blanche to flout Australian law. Finally, seemingly small disagreements over jurisdiction advanced up the chain of command, occupying the time of senior officials on both sides. Neither side considered them insignificant.

US military authorities enjoyed full jurisdiction in Australia, but as a practical necessity, the policing of American servicemen was a duty they shared with Australian military authorities and state police. This shared responsibility led to a number of disagreements between the American military police and shore patrol and the Queensland State Police. Violence or the threat of violence was sometimes a feature of these disagreements. At the heart of these disputes was a sense of group loyalty, especially among American forces. As Gwynne Dyer explains in *War*, “the dominant trend in the history (and prehistory) of human culture has been the creation of larger and larger groups within which each member is defined as “one of us”: a kinsmen, a fellow tribesman, a fellow citizen.”<sup>3</sup> Dyer refers here to one of the root causes of war, that is, the dark side to group mentality, where those who do not share the same collective identity are often warred upon. However, this group mentality can also help explain the friction and conflict between American MPs and shore patrolmen and Queensland Police. For American police authorities, collective identity and national loyalty would often override the duty to police military personnel. Instead of policing American forces, MPs and shore patrolmen often protected them from punishment and occasionally helped them

---

<sup>3</sup> Gwynne Dyer, *War* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1985), 6.

in brawls with state police. Australians were not immune to this mentality either. When the Americans accused police of brutality, Queensland Police authorities instinctively defended their men and dismissed claims of wrongdoing, even though there sometimes was reasonable evidence that police constables exacted informal “justice.”

Finally, it is important to stress that it was not just national loyalty that explains American behaviour but also the fact that they were soldiers. Americans shared group loyalty to their country, but they also identified with themselves as soldiers. Basic training helped create this bond, which some military historians liken to a brotherhood.<sup>4</sup> David Grossman goes so far as to claim in *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* that bonds within combat units were “stronger than those between husband and wife.”<sup>5</sup> Although, MPs and shore patrolmen were generally not combat troops, one must not discount the influence of this further group identity. It too helps explain why American military police protected their fellow soldiers.

### **Establishing Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction**

In early March 1942, Lieutenant General George Brett, who briefly commanded the US forces in Australia before MacArthur’s arrival and promotion to supreme commander of the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA), wrote Prime Minister John Curtin asking for the surrender of an American soldier arrested by Australian police. This request brought the question of legal jurisdiction to the attention of Curtin’s

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>5</sup> David Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1995), 90.

government and initiated a debate among its members.<sup>6</sup> Some were willing to accept Brett's request, which amounted to full extra-territorial jurisdiction; however, the Department of the Army wanted to retain serious crimes, such as murder and rape, within Australia's ambit.<sup>7</sup> Despite the department's objections and a debate in parliament, the Commonwealth adopted the National Security (Allied Forces) Regulations (NSR) in May 1942 to accommodate the Americans' request for full jurisdiction.<sup>8</sup> The regulations stated

Where any member of the United States Forces in Australia is arrested or detained on a charge of having committed an offence against the Commonwealth, the appropriate officer of the United States Forces shall be notified and, if he so requests, the member shall be handed over to him and shall thereupon cease to be subject to the jurisdiction of the criminal courts in Australia.<sup>9</sup>

Although the NSR seemingly spelled out clear jurisdictional boundaries and gave state police the right to arrest American personnel, the practical application of the regulations sometimes led to disputes between the US military and Australian civil authorities.

Attentive Australians learned of the NSR and its practical impact almost immediately. Brisbane's *Courier Mail* reported on May 20 that US soldier J.W. Floyd

---

<sup>6</sup> E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under: The American Impact on Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), 232.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> According to Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, "[u]nder the National Security Act of September 1939 all Australians theoretically lost many of the civil rights they had been accustomed to exercising. The Act gave the government emergency powers that enabled it to govern without recourse to Parliament and the legislative process. These emergency powers were implemented through the National Security Regulations, by which ministers could make laws by the proclamation of a regulation. The National Security Act (clause 18) enabled these regulations to have supremacy over other laws, so that, for the duration of the Act, there were no protections for individual rights and liberties, and no remedies against arbitrary infringements of individual rights." See Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, "Citizenship, Rights and Emergency Powers in Second World War Australia," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53:2 (June 2007): 207.

<sup>9</sup> L.S. Ostrander to Commanding General, 23 June 1942, Queensland State Archives (QSA), Police Files, A/12035.

was charged with rape and handed over to American authorities.<sup>10</sup> A few days later, Curtin publicly announced that American military authorities would deal with US personnel who broke the laws of the Commonwealth.<sup>11</sup> Public reaction to this loss of jurisdiction was generally muted, but it nevertheless included flashes of Australian anger. Naturalist and public servant, David G. Stead, condemned the Curtin government in a letter to Queensland's Minister of Justice. Stead complained that the

Acceptance of this condition by the Australian Governments is surely extraterritoriality [sic] at its worst. It is the erection of a foreign State within our Australian State. Further it is extraordinarily unjust to the Australian people-at-large, who have an absolute, and so far an unquestioned, right, to deal with all civil misdemeanours or crimes by their own laws, regardless of whether the person charged or convicted is of foreign origin.<sup>12</sup>

Former Commonwealth Attorney General Frank Brennan called the US court martial of an American soldier accused of killing an Australian "a radical and dangerous departure from correct procedure."<sup>13</sup> In Brennan's view, such cases fell within the jurisdiction of Australian courts.<sup>14</sup> Stead and Brennan's protests aside, there was no outcry over the National Security Regulations. If average Australians considered the loss of jurisdiction at all, they probably thought it a small price to pay for the American defence of Australia.

### **The NSR, Jurisdictional Disputes, and Wartime Tension**

The NSR established American extra-territorial jurisdiction, but local grievances, and pride in protecting one's own people, insinuated their way into an assortment of legal

---

<sup>10</sup> *Courier Mail* (Brisbane), 20 May 1942.

<sup>11</sup> Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990), 217.

<sup>12</sup> David G. Stead to the Minister of Justice, 25 May 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>13</sup> *Courier Mail*, 01 June 1942.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

conflicts. Jurisdictional disagreements flared up over American criminal and civil wrongdoings. The crimes themselves were minor in nature. They did not prompt an outcry from the Australian public and received little media attention. Nevertheless, the jurisdictional wrangles they created reached the highest levels of Australian and American authority. Both sides considered them important. These disputes also offer insights into the behaviour of GIs and relations between American personnel and Australian civilians, especially at the lower levels of authority. Quarrels indicate that Australian officials were affronted by what they considered American arrogance and indifference to Australian law. US military authorities themselves bristled over Australian unwillingness to interpret the NSR in a spirit of flexibility that would have streamlined the processes for turning over American personnel. In the American view, the Australian authorities' slavish adherence to the letter of the National Security Regulations was not only wrong, but it also hindered the war effort.

It is also worth mentioning that these disputes shared a common denominator. They occurred away from the centre of American and Queensland administrative power in Brisbane. While there were no jurisdictional problems in the city that contained MacArthur's headquarters, the state parliament, and the headquarters of the state police, they existed in North Queensland where the Americans maintained a substantial number of personnel. One reason why jurisdiction disputes flared up in Base Section Two and not elsewhere was that US army policy and the nature of the American presence allowed for a great deal of decentralization when it came to managing relations in Australia. This meant that base section commanders were largely responsible for relations with local

authorities and civilians generally. According to Colonel Allan Snyder, the second-in-command of Base Section Two, some American officers in North Queensland did not know how to deal with Australians diplomatically and did not realize that Australians could be as proud as Americans. The original American commander of Base Section Two was also considered arrogant and particularly inept in his dealings with local officials.<sup>15</sup> American assertive behaviour was but one factor contributing to friction. North Queensland possessed a history of rebelliousness and alienation from Brisbane and Canberra. The spirit of separateness played out during the occupation; the American forces displaced southern authorities as the arrogant transgressors of local pride and sensitivity. Two government investigators sent to the region to gauge civilian morale in January 1943 observed “a parochialism, created by geographical isolation...left the people without profound knowledge of the rest of the continent, much less the rest of the world.”<sup>16</sup> Local concerns and grievances took on great importance despite the war.

Only a month after the NSR were amended to accommodate General Brett’s request, an incident involving a minor breach of traffic regulations in Townsville sparked a jurisdiction dispute that highlighted American behaviour and civilian grievances in the city. In June 1942, two American army jeeps had parked in the middle of a city street, while their occupants searched for a soldier who was absent without leave. Because the jeeps were obstructing traffic, Constable H.R. Barnes accosted the drivers who were two American lieutenants. When Barnes told Lieutenant G.E. Scott that his jeep should have been parked at the curb for the sake of safety, Scott complained about the constable’s

---

<sup>15</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 260.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.



officiousness and said, “I shall park where I like.”<sup>17</sup> In response to Barnes’s query if he had parked the jeep, the American said “Yes, and I intend to go to the chief of Police straight away and make a complaint about you. We belong to the Military Police.”<sup>18</sup> Barnes informed the MP that he would report the incident himself and took the lieutenant’s name. Scott disputed the traffic constable’s right to report him and drove off. Barnes then took the name of the other driver, Lieutenant W.F. Leavitt and also told him that he was going to report the incident.<sup>19</sup>

In the days that followed, the lieutenants received summons to appear in Magistrates Court, but neither appeared on the appointed day. Instead, an American representative met with Townsville’s sub-inspector of police and disputed the right of the court to summon the lieutenants. When asked why he thought the court had no right to summon the soldiers, the representative replied that the traffic incident was a criminal matter and therefore American jurisdiction. Sub-Inspector J.A. Connolly disagreed with this interpretation and argued that the stipendiary magistrate had jurisdiction over the incident because the infraction was not a crime but a municipal ordinance.<sup>20</sup> In the days that followed, the magistrate granted a series of adjournments, while the case worked its way up the American military and Queensland Police chains of command.

The case came to the attention of the headquarters of Major General Julian F. Barnes, who commanded the United States Army Forces in Australia (USAFIA). By this time, the USAFIA had become responsible for the supply, transportation, and

---

<sup>17</sup> L.R. Barnes to Inspector of Police, 15 September 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> A. J. Connolly to Inspector of Police, 18 September 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

administration of MacArthur's forces in the SWPA.<sup>21</sup> Through Adjutant General L.S. Ostrander, Barnes ordered the commander of the 208<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery stationed in Townsville to ask local Queensland authorities to hand over jurisdiction.<sup>22</sup> According to Barnes's missive, the case involving the lieutenants was criminal in nature and therefore fell within the purview of the US military as per the NSR. Barnes believed that Leavitt and Scott should not appear in the Magistrates Court.<sup>23</sup>

Queensland authorities did not interpret the NSR the same way. In his July 20 letter to the Department of Justice, the Crown Prosecutor for Queensland believed the court in fact had the jurisdiction to deal with traffic infractions. The prosecutor determined this because, in the case of traffic violations, the Americans were not in fact arrested or detained but "*generally* proceeded against by summons."<sup>24</sup> Queensland's solicitor general agreed with the prosecutor's interpretation of the law, reasoning that since a summons to the Magistrates Court did not amount to an arrest or detention, the local authorities had jurisdiction. Only when a US serviceman refused to obey a summons or failed to pay a fine could he be arrested, handed over to the American authorities, and then fall within their jurisdiction.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> The USAFIA was the precursor to the United States Army Services of Supply (USASOS). See Joseph Bykofsky and Harold Larson, *United States Army in World War II, The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas* (Washington DC, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1957), 426-29.

<sup>22</sup> Headquarters United States Army Forces in Australia to Commanding Officer, 208<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery, 30 June 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Crown Prosecutor to the Under Secretary of the Department of Justice, 20 July 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>25</sup> Under Secretary Department of Justice to Stipendiary Magistrate Turnbull, 29 July 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

Matters came to a head when the Magistrates Court reconvened in August and found Scott and Leavitt guilty, fining them both. The conviction was carried out *ex parte* as the American officers did not appear and their representative disputed the jurisdiction of the court.<sup>26</sup> The conviction provoked more jurisdictional squabbling between Queensland's attorney general and US authorities, yet, no settlement was reached and both sides continued to claim jurisdiction over the case. Queensland officials chose to force the issue of jurisdiction because in early September, they issued the American commander in Townsville with a search and seize warrant for Leavitt's property.<sup>27</sup> American military personnel refused the Queensland constable access to Leavitt's quarters and so he returned the following day with an arrest warrant for failure to pay the fine. The constable served the arrest warrant on Leavitt's commanding officer and effectively handed jurisdiction over to the Americans. Leavitt's commanding officer, upon taking jurisdiction, stated "the case is now considered closed."<sup>28</sup>

A few weeks after the supposed end of the crisis, the Magistrates Court in Townsville summoned two more American soldiers, this time for the assault on a railway guard. The GIs did not appear before the bench, which resulted in the prosecutor and magistrate declaring their absence "an insult to His Majesty."<sup>29</sup> Despite the Americans' absence, the magistrate claimed that the court had the power to adjudicate the case since

---

<sup>26</sup> Sub-Inspector A.J. Connolly to Townsville Inspector of Police, 18 September 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>27</sup> George M. Welch to the Commanding General United States Army Services of Supply, 05 October 1942, National Archives and Records Administration II (NARA) (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File 014.31, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 6.

it was not a criminal court.<sup>30</sup> Leavitt's commanding officer was mistaken to conclude that jurisdictional problems had come to an end.

The Americans considered these latest proceedings as another breach of the NSR. A staff judge advocate report concluded that "the Magistrate's Courts [sic] in Australia, regardless of any statement to the contrary, are essentially administering criminal jurisdiction" and that "in furtherance of the war effort it is obvious that military personnel cannot be subjected to imprisonment by the magistrate's courts...nor can we, as a matter of principle, bow to such jurisdiction."<sup>31</sup> The situation was so grim that George Welsh, a staff judge advocate, requested permission to meet with the Commonwealth's attorney general to settle the dispute; he also thought Prime Minister Curtin might need to be contacted to resolve the problems in Townsville. Welsh's commanding officer passed the request on to MacArthur, adding "it is considered most important that direct action be taken to adjust the matter with Australian Commonwealth officials in Canberra. It is apparent that written communications with the attorney general of Queensland have not been productive of satisfactory results."<sup>32</sup> The American considered further discussions with Queensland authorities a waste of time.<sup>33</sup>

Welch met with the Commonwealth's Attorney General, Herbert Evatt, on October 19. If Queensland officials were following the letter of the law, they were not

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> R.J. Marshal to the Commander-in-Chief Southwest Pacific Area, 09 October 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File 014.31.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

following its spirit in Evatt's view.<sup>34</sup> He agreed with the Americans that officials in Townsville had exercised criminal jurisdiction in the cases brought before local magistrates. In order to avoid any future jurisdictional disputes, Evatt agreed to amend the NSR, which was done the next day; the regulations now stated that if a member of the US forces was "*summoned, charged or otherwise proceeded against*, further proceedings in respect of the offence shall be stayed and the member shall thereupon cease to be subject to the jurisdiction of the courts of Australia" (italics mine).<sup>35</sup> The amendment of the NSR eliminated any further disputes with regard to the jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court in Townsville or elsewhere. An ambiguity had been resolved, but only because simmering inter-communal tensions in Townsville had erupted into a judicial confrontation.

The tempest in Townsville demonstrates that despite efforts to manage relations through the NSR, disputes still occurred at the local level. However, why did this affair reach the highest levels of authority before a resolution was reached? If Queensland officials did not follow the spirit of the NSR, why not? Was this simply a case of local officialdom jealously guarding its authority, or do the actions of Queensland officials give us some clue about American behaviour in Townsville and Australian-American relations in the city? To answer these questions we must return to Constable Barnes's initial altercation with Scott and Leavitt.

---

<sup>34</sup> George M. Welsh to the Commanding General, United States Army Services of Supply, 19 October 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File 014.31.

<sup>35</sup> Prime Minister to Premier, 20 October 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

Barnes reported that when he told Scott of his parking violation, the latter “showed anger and his attitude became one of antagonism.”<sup>36</sup> Scott then complained that the Queensland constable was too zealous and that he would park where he liked. This is admittedly the constable’s version of events, but it suggests a degree of arrogance and a confrontational manner. Such conduct was characteristic of some Americans in Townsville (one will recall that the original commander of Base Section Two was considered particularly arrogant and hard to deal with).<sup>37</sup> Coupled with this arrogance was an indifference to traffic law in the city. In justifying his decision to report the incident, Barnes noted that “complaints were frequently being made by the Public to myself...to my Sub-Inspector personally with reference to the flagrant [traffic] breaches which were being committed daily, in and about the City, by Army vehicles.”<sup>38</sup> Scott’s belief that wartime exigencies and his status as an American soldier allowed him to flout local law was shared by many of his comrades. Australians might have been allies, but the war overrode the concerns of civilians and civil law.

Correspondence between Barnes’s superiors supports the argument that the Americans in Townsville often flouted local traffic laws and jeopardised the safety of the populace. Barnes had not been officious; he reacted to widespread American misconduct and disrespect of Australian law. Sub-Inspector Connolly wrote Townsville’s inspector of police, telling him “the City Council Business people and other citizens had brought under my notice the flagrant breaches of the Traffic Act being committed by the Armed

---

<sup>36</sup> L.R. Barnes to Inspector of Police, 15 September 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>37</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 260.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

Forces in Townsville, particularly by members of the United States Army forces.”<sup>39</sup>

Connolly believed that such breaches of traffic regulations endangered the safety of Townsville residents who used the highways.<sup>40</sup> The proceedings against Scott and Leavitt were not the work of an overzealous traffic constable but were consciously brought about by frustrated local authorities who had had enough of Americans ignoring the state’s laws.

Sub-Inspector Connolly defended his decision to prosecute the lieutenants in his report, believing that the “proceedings were imperative in order to fully educate the members of the [American] forces to the fact that they were liable to breaches of the Traffic regulations.”<sup>41</sup> Townsville officials saw no other alternative but to prosecute the Americans and force the question of jurisdiction because “prior to these breaches having been committed, ample warning had been given to offenders and their superior officers, as to liability, but apparently these warnings were ignored.”<sup>42</sup>

Queensland officials in Townsville wanted this conflict to reach the highest levels of authority in order to expose and correct American misconduct. Townville’s inspector of police suggested as much in a letter to the state’s Police Commissioner, Cecil Carroll. “The action taken was imperative as warnings were being ignored and traffic was getting hopelessly out of control,” he wrote, “[it] *certainly served its purpose* as the

---

<sup>39</sup> A.J. Connolly to Inspector of Police, 18 September 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

position has greatly improved which shows where the want of co-operation existed”  
(italics mine).<sup>43</sup>

Jurisdictional problems, indicative of strained relations, cropped up in other communities in North Queensland. In May 1943, a minor incident in Cairns resulted in a public denunciation of local authorities by a representative of the US army. The episode began when Cairns police arrested US soldier Edward Collins for urinating in public. As per standard procedure in the town, the GI was brought to the police watchhouse and charged; however, contrary to previous occasions when police charged Americans with misdemeanours, Collins was not given the option of bail.<sup>44</sup> Instead, he remained in jail for two days and then appeared at the town’s Police Court. At this proceeding, the US Army’s representative, Private Harold Judivich, argued that Collins should have been granted bail and warned that if future American offenders were not given the option then “the existing co-operation between the Civil Police and the American Military Authorities could not continue.”<sup>45</sup> Judivich added that the US Provost Corps had requested Collins’s release but had been refused. This disconcerted Judivich because minor offenders were forced to appear in court before being released into American custody, and some offenders had duties crucial to the war effort.<sup>46</sup>

It will be recalled that the revised NSR specified American authorities could take charge of transgressors when they were summoned, charged or proceeded against. Thus, Queensland Police could still arrest and detain Americans up to the point of

---

<sup>43</sup> Inspector of Police to the Commissioner of Police, 21 September 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>44</sup> Sub-Inspector to Inspector of Police, 29 May 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



actually proceeding against them. The state's police in Cairns were applying standard procedures to American personnel. However, it appears they had enforced them rigorously in reaction to previous American trickery. According to one Queensland Police report, American servicemen frequently impersonated officers to free their comrades from the custody of civil authorities.<sup>47</sup> To prevent that, Queensland Police compelled US offenders to appear in court so they would be handed over to a responsible authority. Likewise, making petty offenders post bail increased the likelihood that they would later appear before the court; if they did not appear, their bail money was forfeited. Nevertheless, if American authorities did agree to the admission of bail for their soldiers, why did Queensland Police in Cairns suddenly change this policy? Was this another instance, as in Townsville, where local authorities orchestrated a jurisdictional conflict because of American misconduct? The short answer is no. The Americans were the authors of this particular dispute due to poor communications among the US forces in Cairns.

Before Private Judivich made his outburst in court, on May 13, the new US provost marshal for Cairns, a Major Wojnowski, requested that Queensland Police refuse American servicemen bail under any circumstances. The provost marshal acted on complaints from US soldiers who grumbled about the large sums of money they had to pay for bail.<sup>48</sup> Wojnowski also disliked the status quo because, in the event that local police arrested soldiers who were also wanted by the Americans, the offenders could evade US authorities if granted bail. Because of these concerns, the American suggested

---

<sup>47</sup> Inspector Mullally to Commissioner of Police, 26 September 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>48</sup> Inspector of Police to Commissioner, 01 June 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

that instead of offering bail, the magistrate should notify the Provost Corps and after a proper application for their release was made, soldiers should be released into American custody.<sup>49</sup> The district's Inspector of Police, Percy Mullally, agreed, but stressed that "before any of the personnel would be released, they would have to appear before the Police court."<sup>50</sup> Only then could they be handed over to the Americans. Crucially, Major Wojnowski agreed to this procedure.

Therefore, the Americans had precipitated the jurisdictional dispute arising out of Collins's arrest. Private Judivich was unaware of the agreement Major Wojnowski had formulated with Inspector Mullally. The left hand did not know what the right hand was doing. Nevertheless, the affair created two problems. Judivich's confrontational attitude strained official American-Australian relations in Cairns, and the jurisdictional issue created by ending bail remained unresolved. With regard to the former, Provost Marshal Wojnowski met with Inspector Mullally to apologize for Judivich's behaviour in the Police Court. Wojnowski told the inspector that the private had "spoken out of place and without Authority, and was young, energetic, and had to be excused."<sup>51</sup> During this meeting, the two men also discussed the delicate matter of American soldiers having to appear before the bench so to be released into American custody. Here Wojnowski expressed concern that if "American personnel were arrested after the Court had finished sitting and...were required to leave Cairns before the Court sat again" these men could lose contact with their units.<sup>52</sup> Mullally restated that if the Americans did not want the

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

option of bail then all cases would have to go before the courts. However, he agreed to give Wojnowski every assistance in making sure American personnel came before the bench promptly so they could join their embarking units.<sup>53</sup>

If the two men thought that they had resolved the matter, they were mistaken, for the American army commander in Cairns considered their agreement unacceptable. Colonel Ray Lewis, in his letter to Inspector Mullally cited the NSR and complained that American servicemen were being made to appear in court. The colonel considered such court appearances a breach of the NSR and inefficient as well. He wanted an arrangement that would “expedite punishing those who violate the Regulations of the Army or the Commonwealth.”<sup>54</sup> Rejecting the agreement struck by Mullally and Wojnowski, Lewis thus insisted that the police immediately hand over all US servicemen to the American military after arrest.<sup>55</sup>

Local officials plainly did not know how to proceed in light of this request because Mullally reported the issue to Queensland’s Commissioner of Police Cecil Carroll. The commissioner was equally puzzled because he asked the state’s Attorney General if the police would be “justified in handing over arrested [servicemen] upon the verbal request of the appropriate US Officer without...producing him before a Court of summary jurisdiction?”<sup>56</sup> This issue was of some concern to Carroll because he wanted friction between the American military and the civil authorities eliminated.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ray H. Lewis to P.J. Mullally, 31 May 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Commissioner of Police to the Under Secretary, Department of Justice, 08 July 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

This dispute languished for months until Commissioner Carroll met with a US staff judge advocate in June 1944. During this conference, the NSR were discussed, along with problems in Cairns. One outcome of the meeting was that Commissioner Carroll asked Inspector Mullally to resolve the problems that stemmed from the incarceration of US servicemen in the town.<sup>58</sup> The commissioner noted that, during his meeting with the staff judge advocate, the American authorities expressed their desire “to get back into their custody all such members as may have been arrested on civil charges by the civil powers as soon as is humanly possible after arrest, and if necessary before such personnel are produced in a State Court.”<sup>59</sup> Carroll went so far as to order the inspector to effect the early release of American servicemen before they appeared in court. He granted that Americans had to appear in court for serious crimes, but concluded that “production...need not be asked for in relation to trivial cases, such as trivial assaults, breaches of the Vagrant Act and the like.”<sup>60</sup> Inspector Mullally eventually worked out an agreement with US military authorities whereby Americans arrested for petty offences were handed over to US authorities with the promise that they would later appear in court. However, as we shall see in the examination of police disputes, the breakdown of this agreement created a major row between Queensland Police and the American military in Cairns.<sup>61</sup>

Can we draw any insights from this episode in Cairns in terms of American-Australian relations? Unlike the affair in Townsville, where exasperated local officials

---

<sup>58</sup> Commissioner of Police to Inspector of Police, 14 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Inspector Mullally to Commissioner of Police, 23 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12044.

consciously forced a jurisdictional crisis in response to American misbehaviour, Cairns officials acted in good faith. Indeed, they were happy with the status quo before Collins's arrest and only changed their practices at the behest of the American provost marshal. If they were guilty of anything it was grafting standard civil law practices onto the NSR; that is, first making bail available to American servicemen and then obliging them to appear before a magistrate. Queensland Police could have handed offenders directly to the Provost Corps. That state police did not do this is hardly surprising given that they used standard civil procedures as a template in their dealings with American offenders. One could argue that officials in Cairns were guilty of bureaucratic foot dragging, as they did not adapt their procedures at the Americans' request in the spring of 1943. After all, the Americans were still asking for a more expeditious *modus operandi* in June 1944. Still, given that some American servicemen falsely represented themselves as officers so to free their comrades, it is little wonder that police in Cairns were slow to respond to American desires.

For their part, the Americans' position that their men should be handed over upon verbal request had merit, yet they did author the dilemma; poor internal communications created the problem in the first place. Moreover, once the dispute broke out, the US commander in Cairns blamed local officials for a procedure that was suggested by his provost marshal. It was this American inconsistency and lack of diplomacy that led to the dispute and created the friction that Commissioner Carroll so wanted to eliminate.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the American commander in Cairns did not address the problem of

---

<sup>62</sup> Commissioner of Police to the Under Secretary, Department of Justice, 08 July 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

servicemen posing as officers. One could argue that in the final analysis, we again see an example of American arrogance especially evident in the determination of Colonel Lewis to keep his men from the humiliation of a court appearance and possible media coverage. Rather than trying to find the origin of the problem, the American commander simply cited the NSR, blamed the local authorities for the problems, and ordered the release of his men. It is little wonder that local police were slow to accommodate their American guests.

### **Sharing Police Duties: Tension and Disputes**

Under the National Security Regulations, Australian police forces had the right to arrest, detain, and investigate US personnel; in practice this meant that they shared policing duties with American MPs and shore patrolmen. American military authorities never entertained the idea of policing their own men exclusively. Separate policing duties were inherently impracticable. American and Australian authorities envisioned the chaos that would have ensued if the state police had to ignore American crimes and wait for the arrival of American MPs or shore patrolmen. Moreover, had American authorities wanted to exclusively police their men while off base, the size of the American presence would have overwhelmed them and detracted from the war effort. The American military simply needed all the help it could get when it came to policing military personnel.

Relations between police forces were generally amicable, but shared authority occasionally created friction. State police felt aggrieved over what they saw as an American unwillingness to enforce Australian law; there were persistent disagreements

over the interpretation of the NSR; American MPs and shore patrolmen at times failed to co-operate with local police; US personnel accused Queensland Police of brutality; and most strikingly, state police sometimes found their efforts to arrest American servicemen frustrated by American MPs and shore patrolman. Significantly, there were even a few episodes when the Queensland constabulary clashed physically with their American counterparts, with unfortunate results for relations between the allies.

At the heart of these disputes were national loyalties and *esprit de corps*. MPs and shore patrolmen did not see themselves solely as policemen, they were Americans and soldiers too. Their loyalties often lay with the men they were supposed to control. Instead of policing their comrades, MPs and shore patrol sometimes defended their countrymen and shielded them from state police. The Americans were not alone when it came to feelings of national loyalty. In cases where state police were accused of brutality, senior officials invariably believed their own men's version of events and defended their actions when confronted with American complaints. Like jurisdictional disputes, many examples of conflict happened in North Queensland. Similar to their senior commanders in the region, American MPs and shore patrolmen lacked diplomacy, ignored civilian concerns, and failed to co-operate with local authorities.

Given that local authorities and junior officers contested jurisdictional boundaries, it is not surprising that Queensland Police and American military authorities disputed interpretations of the NSR. In June 1944, Brisbane Constable G. W. Blanckensee arrested an American sailor for assaulting a policeman and using obscene language. Since a US shore patrol van was at the scene of the arrest, the constable placed his prisoner

inside with the understanding that he would be brought to the city watchhouse for booking. However, the American officer in charge of the shore patrol, a Lieutenant Hartmann, told the constable that he would not convey the offender to the watchhouse in the van.<sup>63</sup>

When Blanckensee intimated his desire to remove the sailor from the van and take him to the watchhouse himself, Hartmann refused to release the prisoner. The American told Blanckensee that he “had received instructions that whenever members of the Shore Patrol arrived at the scene of any disturbance in which U.S. Sailors were involved they were definitely not to allow any sailors to be taken to the City Watchhouse.”<sup>64</sup> Hartmann made half-hearted efforts to reach an accord with Blanckensee, but in the end the constable had to accept that he lost his prisoner. The American officer tried to end the incident on a conciliatory tone, telling the constable “I have my instructions to carry out and I am sorry if by doing so I have made it impossible for you to carry out your instructions.”<sup>65</sup>

Constable Blanckensee believed, with good reason, that he had interpreted the NSR correctly; in his report, he noted that none of the other policemen he talked to knew that the shore patrol would refuse to transport US sailors to the watchhouse. More importantly, Blanckensee also learned that it was normal procedure for American MP vans to take American soldiers to the watchhouse where they were charged.<sup>66</sup> Here, one may wonder why Queensland Police were still charging US servicemen rather than

---

<sup>63</sup> Constable G.W. Blanckensee to Inspector of Police, 29 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.



handing them over directly to American authorities given the episode in Cairns. It is possible that an assault on a police officer warranted a trip to the watchhouse. However, it is more likely that because of decentralized nature of the American command in Australia and the fact that MacArthur left relations to the discretion of base section commanders, there was never a uniform policy in regards to the transfer of American servicemen. Therefore, the *modus operandi* in Brisbane was different than in Cairns. American military authorities never challenged an established policy of booking US servicemen in Brisbane.

Regardless, the fact that Lieutenant Hartmann contravened normal procedure in the city suggests he was not acting in good faith. That the drunken American who assaulted Constable Blanckensee in the first place left Brisbane by ship only a few hours after his arrest supports this contention.<sup>67</sup> Lieutenant Hartmann of the shore patrol, looking after the interests of a fellow American and of the US navy, acted to preclude any civil proceedings that would have forced Blanckensee's erstwhile prisoner to stay in Brisbane or face a court martial. This action also corresponded with War Department policy which, in order to maximize manpower, ordered "military leaders to resort to court martial only as a last resort; even then to utilize the lowest type of punishment and as indicative of a policy that this punishment should be resorted to, and then maintained, only when absolutely necessary."<sup>68</sup> National loyalty and wartime exigencies meant that Lieutenant Hartmann protected his fellow American. The impression that Americans

---

<sup>67</sup> Inspector of Police to Commissioner of Police, 07 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>68</sup> Ernest A. Burt to Staff Judge Advocates, 16 September 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1269, File: Prisoners.

could escape with impunity – worse that Americans believed they could escape with impunity – was not lost on Brisbane police constables.

Although the district's inspector of police conceded that Hartmann might have been "within his rights according to the strict terms of the [NSR] instructions," had he only allowed the police to take the sailor to the watchhouse then there would be no cause for complaint.<sup>69</sup> At the conclusion of his report, the inspector reiterated that the constables in his district were instructed to co-operate with the US shore patrol in every way and he requested that Commissioner Carroll raise the matter of reciprocal assistance with the US naval authorities. The inspector felt co-operation was only a one-way street. Carroll made inquiries into the incident and contacted US authorities. He sent back the inspector's report with marginal comments stating that Lieutenant Hartmann's version of events conflicted with the constable's. The shore patrol had told Carroll that they always co-operated with local authorities whenever possible.<sup>70</sup> The commissioner considered the incident closed.

On other occasions American authorities failed to co-operate with Queensland Police. In October 1942, police arrested an Australian in the employ of the American army for stealing tea at Bretts Wharf in Brisbane. A few weeks after the arrest, the American in charge of the wharf, a Colonel Grimm, requested an interview with a representative from the Queensland State Police. During the meeting, the colonel asked that all legal proceedings be stopped even though he had no evidence exculpating the accused. The colonel considered the arrest unjust from an American point of view, for he

---

<sup>69</sup> Inspector of Police to Commissioner of Police, 07 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

stated, “it was not right that any man should be made to prove his innocence.”<sup>71</sup> The colonel went on to say that such a trivial incident should never have been reported to begin with and the whole proceeding amounted to persecution.<sup>72</sup>

In reaction to the American’s position, the police representative Detective Constable H.W. Bauer noted the guard who initially arrested the Australian was “employed by the U.S. Authorities to watch for pilfering or pillaging” and that the action he took “was quite in accordance with his employment.”<sup>73</sup> The constable also pointed out that another one of the colonel’s guards contacted the Brisbane police about the matter in the first place. Interestingly, the colonel responded that the guard was censured for contacting the police and cautioned that “if such a thing occurred again...he would have to look for another job.”<sup>74</sup> Grimm considered the wharf his turf and bridled at Australian interference. As far as he was concerned, Queensland Police had no right to question his actions. When Constable Bauer reminded the colonel that, although the accused was in his employ, he was still a Queensland citizen and subject to the laws of the state, the colonel responded that he did not care and if the case was not withdrawn, he would sack all of the guards in his employ and hire ones that did what he wanted.<sup>75</sup>

Baffled and angered by the attitude of the American colonel, Queensland Police acknowledged that although the theft of a small amount of tea was trivial, to drop the case would have been short sighted. If every wharf labourer arrested for petty theft was released, others would see such inaction as a license to steal. Furthermore, police

---

<sup>71</sup> H.W. Bauer to Officer in Charge, 23 October 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

authorities thought that Colonel Grimm (as the officer responsible for the wharf) should have commended men who tried to bring criminals to justice. One police sergeant concluded that Grimm's threat to fire his guards "was unworthy of a man holding his rank and position."<sup>76</sup> Because of his unreasonableness, police authorities decided to report the incident to the colonel's superiors.<sup>77</sup>

Brisbane authorities did not accede to the colonel's threat to fire his civilian employees because criminal proceedings against the accused went forward. During the trial two American sailors under Grimm's command provided evidence exonerating the defendant. The Americans' testimony undermined the prosecution's case and the charges against the Australian were dismissed, much to the consternation of the police who believed that the American witnesses had lied. The magistrate who adjudicated the case shared police suspicions because after the dismissal he announced that the Americans "all appear to be possessed of very remarkable imaginations."<sup>78</sup>

Queensland Police had other occasions to be disappointed with the American police authorities' unwillingness to punish fellow Americans. In December 1942, American Private Jimmy Gonzales was arrested for stealing nine pounds from the home of Irene Jehn. According to the Queensland Police report, Gonzales went to the woman's home after meeting her and her friends at a Brisbane hotel. While the Brisbane woman was in her bedroom, Gonzales allegedly stole nine pounds. Later that evening Queensland Police caught up with the American at a dance club. Upon interrogation,

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> H.W. Bauer to Officer in Charge, 23 November 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

Gonzales admitted to stealing the money, which he had had on his person. After appearing before the magistrate the following day, Gonzales was released into American custody as the NSR required.<sup>79</sup>

A couple of months after the Gonzales's arrest, Jehn complained to Queensland Police that a US army lieutenant had come to her house and harassed her and her sister. According to the woman, the American identified himself as an army investigator and questioned her and her sister about the theft of the money and "subjected them to a critical and insulting cross examination."<sup>80</sup> The Brisbane woman complained of the lieutenant's vulgar language and undue familiarity; the American investigator allegedly went so far as to put his hand on her leg. At the conclusion of the interview, the lieutenant had the ladies sign a statement but he "instructed them to sign near the bottom of the page, leaving a space between the typing and the signature."<sup>81</sup> The police report intimated that the lieutenant had left the space so he could later alter the ladies' statements.

Before he left, the ladies claimed the lieutenant tried to dissuade them from testifying at the court martial, stating that they would "get hell at the Court Martial, that there would be reporters there and they would get plenty of publicity."<sup>82</sup> Remarkably, the American suggested that someone else stole the money and "the Court Martial would be in favour of Gonzales as he was batman to the [judge] advocate and that there was no

---

<sup>79</sup> Inspector of Police to Commissioner, 03 March 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

chance of him being found guilty.”<sup>83</sup> Police authorities complained to the US Army about the lieutenant’s behaviour, but he avoided censure. Furthermore, the lieutenant’s prediction about Gonzales’s court martial was born out. Not only was the private acquitted, but Queensland Constable John Strophair overheard an American private remark to a friend that Gonzales “had nothing to be afraid of, that it was all fixed up, that he was getting out of it and that he would be shaking hands with them shortly.”<sup>84</sup> Strophair heard this conversation while waiting to give testimony at Gonzales’s court martial! Rather than punish criminals, national loyalty and comradeship meant that the Americans closed ranks to protect their countrymen.

The inaction and indifference of American MPs and shore patrolmen when confronted with the criminal behaviour of their countrymen also angered state police. In April 1943, Queensland Police arrested an American soldier for obscene language, assaulting a police officer, and destroying property. Before his arrest, the American was warned on several occasions to refrain from using obscene language in the town centre of Gladstone. What makes this event significant is that a constable had first warned the soldier of his behaviour and then solicited the aid of Lieutenant Robert Stout, an American MP officer. Though Stout witnessed Private Irvine Farmer swear on several occasions after the initial warning, he did nothing other than half-heartedly threaten to send him back to his troopship. The police officer, a Constable Gregg became exasperated with the officer’s inaction, for he threatened Farmer with arrest. The private took no notice of the warning because a few minutes later he began swearing again

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

outside a local dance hall; this prompted the constable to warn the American lieutenant that if he did not arrest Farmer then he would. The lieutenant warned the constable not to arrest the soldier and said he would handle the situation.<sup>85</sup>

Lieutenant Stout did not handle the situation because after Gregg's warnings, Farmer participated in a brawl at a nearby dancehall. American MPs finally arrested the soldier, after a fashion. He was placed in a US army truck, but left there without a guard. While sitting in the truck, the American let loose a torrent of obscenities on Gregg, who was also at the dance hall. Farmer followed up his verbal tirade with a physical attack on the policeman; in the struggle that followed, Farmer bit the constable and tore his shirt before finally being subdued.<sup>86</sup>

After Constable Gregg arrested the American, Lieutenant Stout returned to the scene and requested the soldier's release into his custody. Gregg denied this appeal and took the offender to the town's police station and charged him. After Private Farmer was processed and released, neither he nor Stout (who also went to the station) would tell Queensland Police to which unit they belonged.<sup>87</sup> The constabulary frowned upon this evident lack of co-operation, which indicated that the lieutenant did not want to police his fellow Americans. Another Gladstone policeman observed Stout's indifference at the police station and reported that the American did not take his duty seriously. In fact, Stout tried to downplay his countryman's actions, as he reportedly "took the attitude that Farmer had a few drinks and was not responsible as they were going into action."<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup> Constable Gregg to Inspector of Police, 06 April 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Sergeant Slevon to Inspector of Police, 06 April 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.



After the incident, Queensland Police inquired about what action was taken against Farmer. The office of the US provost marshal responded that it had no information about what disciplinary measures, if any, were taken. This prompted Commissioner Carroll to conclude “it appears useless pursuing this matter further at this stage. The usual procedure of placing accused before civil court should have been followed. If this would have been done, the matter would have been simplified.”<sup>89</sup> That the man who caused the incident in the first place escaped punishment could only have been seen as an insult.

A similar example of American reluctance to enforce Australian law or punish men for assaulting Australians occurred a few months later in Redbank, when police arrested two American soldiers for threatening local constables with razors. The constables had responded to a disturbance at a local bar where a group of black American soldiers were engaged in a donnybrook with Australian servicemen. Several GIs were unhappy with the arrest of the two men and a sergeant tried to pull one of his countrymen free. For the constables, the situation was precarious, and what happened next only worsened the situation. Two American MPs arrived on the scene, but instead of assisting the constables, they declared that they were off duty and would not help. The off duty MPs exacerbated the situation by telling one constable to release the GI he was holding. Although the MPs later claimed they were trying to defuse the situation, their actions actually inflamed the passions of the GIs. The constable who was told to release his prisoner wisely did so, however the other American was taken into custody.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Commissioner Carroll to Inspector of Police, 08 May 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>90</sup> L.L. Johnstone to Inspector of Police, 01 August 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12044.

Police reacted badly to the MPs' lack of co-operation; according to one police report the MPs' conduct was "reprehensible, as this gave other coloured soldiers in the vicinity incentive to prevent Constable Henry from arresting Evans, and Constable Henry wisely let Evans go."<sup>91</sup> The demand to release the GI emboldened the crowd and made the already bad situation worse. Police considered the incident serious, and recommended that the episode be brought to the attention of the US provost marshal.<sup>92</sup>

The incidents in Redbank and Gladstone were similar in that American MPs demonstrated indifference to Australian law and the plight of Queensland constables. Although the request to release the prisoner in Redbank can be blamed on poor judgement, the MPs' initial indifference to a near riot is difficult to explain. The report makes no mention of the race of the MPs. If they were black, group loyalty probably spurred them to protect their own men. If the MPs were white, perhaps they were afraid to confront a group of African Americans that outnumbered them. After all, as we shall see in chapter four, white MPs had particularly bad relations with black GIs. Whatever the reason, the want of co-operation soured relations in Redbank and Gladstone between American MPs and Queensland Police.

The lack of co-operation between police forces was particularly pronounced in Cairns, leading to an acute souring of relations in June 1944. The problems in the town came into public view when the town's Sub-Inspector of Police, M. Elford, declared that civil authorities received no co-operation from the US shore patrol and little from the American military police during a Police Court session. The sub-inspector was reacting

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

to the US naval authorities' unwillingness to bring two American sailors before the court for breaches of civil law. The sailors had been arrested for obscene language and were released into the hands of the shore patrol with the understanding that they would appear in court the following day. That the sailors failed to appear the next day or the day after prompted Elford's outburst in court.<sup>93</sup> One will recall that this court appearance was in line with the agreement that Police Inspector Percy Mullally forged with American authorities in the area so that petty offenders could be released to the Americans more quickly.

As an interesting aside, newspapers in Cairns and Brisbane reported the sub-inspector's condemnation, which compelled Commissioner Carroll to meet with the press in order to mend relations with the Americans. On June 6, the *Courier Mail* printed a story headlined "US Help Praised By Police Chief." In the report, Carroll downplayed the problems in Cairns and stated "there had always been the closest co-operation between the civil police and police of the American authorities in Brisbane."<sup>94</sup> Carroll even went so far as to contradict his sub-inspector, stating that "civil police and the Americans were still working well together [in Cairns], and the Queensland police were grateful for American assistance."<sup>95</sup>

Despite the commissioner's comments, relations in Cairns were far from satisfactory according to the district's inspector of police. Inspector Mullally, sharing his subordinate's annoyance, provided Carroll with a catalogue of American misconduct. A

---

<sup>93</sup> Inspector Mullally to Commissioner of Police, 23 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12044.

<sup>94</sup> *Courier Mail*, 06 June 1944.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

month before his outburst in court, Sub-Inspector Elford, while walking in the town, suffered a torrent of obscenities at the hands of some American ratings. When told that he was a state policeman, one sailor rejoined, “I don’t give a fuck, fuck your Police Force, we have a fucking police force of our own.”<sup>96</sup> The situation deteriorated from there. One sailor took up a fighting stance and the sub-inspector found himself surrounded by twelve Americans. Luckily, he managed to extricate himself from the group without incident and reported the confrontation to a nearby American shore patrol. Gallingly, the shore patrolmen went to the scene but did nothing even though the offenders were still there.<sup>97</sup>

A couple of weeks later the actions of the shore patrol were even more uncooperative according to Mullally. While patrolling the city, Sub-Inspector Elford came upon an Australian who happened to be in the employ of the US military. Because the man was drunk, Elford ordered two of his subordinates to arrest the man. As the constables took the prisoner away, US shore patrolmen tried to free the Australian. If not for the assistance of a police sergeant, the Americans might have succeeded in their attempt. Mullally’s report noted that, since the prisoner was Australian, the shore patrol had absolutely no jurisdiction to intervene in what was plainly a civil matter.<sup>98</sup>

Carroll learned from the report that the Americans succeeded in freeing American ratings from Queensland Police custody on another occasion. The incident unfolded after three sailors were arrested for destroying some shop windows in the centre of Cairns.

---

<sup>96</sup> Inspector Mullally to Commissioner of Police, 23 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12044.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

The men were subdued with some difficulty; all of them resisted violently and one sailor urged the surrounding American ratings to attack the constables. After the men were finally restrained, the US shore patrol arrived and its commander demanded that the Americans be handed over. The attitude of the American commander, which ignored the authority of Queensland Police, incited the crowd of Americans that had gathered and some of them set upon the policemen. Despite the abuse from the crowd and the shore patrol's demands, the senior policeman on the scene, a Sergeant Horn, refused to release the prisoners; as a result, the shore patrol forcibly took the ratings from the Cairns police. Given that both sides were armed, this was a highly provocative act. In his report, Mullally noted that the actions of the shore patrol tended "to seriously undermine the authority of the Civil Police, with the USA Servicemen."<sup>99</sup>

What followed explains another reason for the cankerous mood of the police in the town. Of the three men responsible for vandalising city shops, the inspector of police reported that only two were court-martialled and found guilty; American authorities did not bother to charge the ringleader of the group who incited the crowd against the constables. The American investigating officer concluded that the alleged chief troublemaker was innocent based on the testimony of the two American sailors who were found guilty! No other witnesses, be they state police or local civilians, were called. Mullally concluded

[t]his gives an idea how punishment is meted out to United States personnel offenders against Australian laws. It is no wonder that such personnel flout the laws of this Country, when they are assisted in such manner as in this case, and are

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

believed in preference to the weight of evidence which is available, and not given or asked for.<sup>100</sup>

The inspector also reported that American authorities had provided no information about the offenders' punishments or offered recompense for the destroyed property.<sup>101</sup> As we shall see in chapter five, ignoring the evidence of the state police and civilian testimony were just two ways American authorities made sure their men escaped punishment. American authorities, motivated by national loyalty and *esprit de corps*, chose to protect their men from punishment which frustrated and angered state police.

In the final episode mentioned in Mullally's report, Sub-Inspector Elford witnessed an American sailor kicking an Australian rating in the head and body. When Elford approached the scene, the American ran off and the Australian lay bleeding and unconscious. When the US shore patrol and the MPs arrived a few minutes later, the sub-inspector tracked down the offender and asked the Americans to arrest him. The patrolman in charge refused and the offending sailor left the scene in an American forces vehicle.<sup>102</sup> Comradeship and nationalism outweighed duty.

Ultimately, Mullally's report revealed that police in Cairns were at the end of their tether. Sub-inspector Elford's outburst in court was born of frustration and he spoke for his fellow policemen. The conduct of the servicemen in the city and the absence of American police co-operation were intolerable. Because relations could not remain as they were, Inspector Mullally called a conference with American authorities in the area with the goal of improving the behaviour of American ratings and gaining the co-

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

operation of the shore patrol. Held only a few days after Elford's outburst, the conference was an initial success and relations in the town improved. Only a couple of weeks after Elford's controversial pronouncements, Mullally reported that the shore patrol was working in full co-operation with local authorities. However, this newfound co-operation proved temporary.<sup>103</sup>

It was not just Queensland Police who were angered by the American authorities' indifference to the conduct of their personnel and unwillingness to police their own men. The apathy of American officialdom, when it came to the poor behaviour of its troops in Beenleigh, prompted residents to petition Police Commissioner Carroll in November 1943. Apparently, the American troops who came to the town on weekends went wild, fought, and destroyed property. Residents believed that the local detachment Queensland Police was incapable of controlling the GIs, so they requested that Commissioner Carroll arrange for a strong presence of American military police.<sup>104</sup>

The south coast district's inspector of police confirmed many of the residents' complaints in a report which Carroll requested. The inspector mentioned that the conduct of the American troops caused great concern among the local police detachment and "despite repeated requests made to the USA authorities for the co-operation of their Provost Corps, very little relief has been forthcoming."<sup>105</sup> The residents were desperate according to the inspector and were preparing a similar petition to the American authorities. The inspector shared the community's frustration because he reiterated that

---

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Residents of Beenleigh to Commissioner of Police, 02 November 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12044.

<sup>105</sup> Inspector of Police to Commissioner of Police, 05 November 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12044.

“repeated requests have been made for the USA authorities to provide Military Police for duty in Beenleigh.”<sup>106</sup> The petition to Commissioner Carroll had an effect because police in Beenleigh reported less than a fortnight later that there was now a US military police detachment present on weekends and that American MPs were co-operating with the constabulary. Behaviour also improved because military authorities had reduced American troop presence in the area.<sup>107</sup>

### **Police Relations: Examples of Violence**

The unwillingness of some US shore patrolmen and MPs to enforce Australian civil laws and control their men strained relations in Queensland. Yet tension due to real or perceived American misconduct was not the only thing that vexed relations. Occasionally American MPs and shore patrolmen threatened and attacked Queensland Police. Once again, national loyalty and comradeship overrode co-operation with state police. In October 1943, a constable on duty at a Brisbane dance hall observed two American MPs rush toward the hall’s lavatory. Finding this peculiar, the constable followed and discovered the Americans fighting three Australian airmen outside the lavatory door; when he attempted to break up the brawl one of the American MPs drew his sidearm. Fortunately, the constable persuaded the MP to holster his gun and end the *mêlée*. The constable then took the RAAF men into custody, however, as the constable and RAAF men left the dancehall, the Americans returned with reinforcements. The MP who had pulled his gun was spoiling for a fight because he rapped one of the RAAF men

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> D.J. Richards to Inspector of Police, 15 November 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12044,.



on the ear with his baton. The constable admonished the MP for his attack and defused the situation without further violence. Though the incident was reported to the office of Commissioner Carroll, no action was taken against the Americans.<sup>108</sup>

In July 1944, a member of the US shore patrol actually attacked a Queensland constable. According to a Queensland Police report, Constable G.W. Blanckensee witnessed a group of sailors drinking outside one of Brisbane's flourishing dancehalls, where upon finishing a bottle of liquor, one of the sailors smashed it. Although another Brisbane constable in the area rebuked the sailors for their sophomoric behaviour, an American shore patrolman, who witnessed the incident, did not reprimand the sailors but instead asked the dance hall manager for a broom to sweep up the broken bottle.<sup>109</sup>

As one of the drunken ratings swept the bottle into the gutter, an incensed comrade asked Ronald Sharer, the shore patrolman, "[w]hat the fucking hell does that bloody cop think he is telling you to fucking well make us sweep up the street?"<sup>110</sup> Sharer's had no answer which encouraged the sailor to utter more profanities against Blanckensee. Because the shore patrolman did not try to stop the sailor from swearing, Constable Blanckensee warned him to check his language. This enraged the sailor even more. He screamed "[w]hat the fuck is the matter with you copper, you have nothing over us and I can and will do as I like and you bloody well won't stop me."<sup>111</sup> Blanckensee retorted that he had every right to caution him when he broke Australian civil laws, which sparked another abusive diatribe from the sailor. In reaction to this

---

<sup>108</sup> Constable Cowley to Inspector of Police, 15 October 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>109</sup> Constable G.W. Blanckensee to Inspector of Police, 30 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

second outburst, the constable grabbed the sailor by the shoulder and told him that he was under arrest.<sup>112</sup> The sailor's impression that he had immunity from Australian law was probably a widespread myth in the American forces, based on a garbled interpretation or a complete ignorance of the NSR. This is not surprising given the nature of the occupation; troops and especially sailors who stopped in Australia for a few days or weeks on their way to battle zones would not know of the regulations.

As if to confirm the idea of immunity, Sharer told Blanckensee not to touch the sailor and tried to break the constable's hold on the detainee. Several of the offender's comrades, encouraged by the shore patrolman's actions, also tried to free Blanckensee's prisoner. If attempting to free the prisoner was not enough, Sharer twice punched the constable in the head. The American's attack would have likely continued but not for the timely arrival of several constables and some American MPs. With the arrival of these reinforcements the crowd dispersed, however the sailor who started the fracas with his abusive language escaped in the confusion.<sup>113</sup>

After the incident, Blanckensee called the US shore patrol headquarters and explained to a Lieutenant Amen what transpired. Shortly thereafter, the lieutenant arrived and an independent civilian witness confirmed the constable's version of events. This prompted Amen to relieve Sharer. He also told Blanckensee that "Sharer was only on temporary Shore Patrol duty and that in all probability he had not been thoroughly told what his duty was and that he probably was under the opinion *that the Civil Police had*

---

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

*no jurisdiction over U.S. Sailors*” (italics mine).<sup>114</sup> As the lieutenant took him away, Sharer offered Blanckensee a *mea culpa*, telling him that he was wrong to have attacked him when he should have been helping him.<sup>115</sup> Shore patrolmen, untrained and ignorant of policies formulated from above, felt the pull of comradeship, shirked their duty, and helped their countrymen. Put another way, the duty to help their brothers-in-arms was more powerful than the duty to police them.

Blanckensee escaped serious injury in the attack, but considered the American’s behaviour reprehensible. In his report to the inspector of police, he concluded that had Sharer reprimanded the sailor for using obscene language, the incident would never have escalated. Moreover, Blanckensee complained that Sharer’s interference contributed to the original malefactor evading arrest. The constable requested that his superiors formally protest to the US authorities with the hope that they would prosecute Sharer for assault.<sup>116</sup> Blanckensee’s superiors considered the American’s actions unforgivable; the inspector of police characterized the episode as “a glaring instance of lack of co-operation.”<sup>117</sup>

As we have seen above, there were several instances of discord between Queensland and American military authorities in and around Cairns. Relations between respective police forces were especially bad and here too there was some violence. Denis Doherty, a young constable stationed at Cairns during the war, recounted fifty years later an incident where he arrested an American serviceman during a clash between US and

---

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Inspector of Police to the Commissioner of Police, 31 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

Australian soldiers. The constable recalled that during the fight an American MP had grabbed him while he was putting his prisoner into a police car. Had one of Doherty's fellow constables not pushed him and his prisoner into the vehicle, the American would have struck the constable. Shortly after Doherty delivered his prisoner to the town's watchhouse, fifteen American MPs arrived under the command of their provost marshal. Incredibly, the provost marshal demanded that the American prisoner be turned over without signing for him. At this point, Doherty learned that his prisoner was in fact an American MP.<sup>118</sup>

The police refused to release their prisoner so the Americans threatened to take their man back by force. Doherty recalled that the Cairns constabulary "hastily assembled along the front verandah...led by the Inspector Percy Mullally. In appearance he was no match for the Provost Marshal, being fat, over 50 and attired in civilian clothing."<sup>119</sup> Despite this disparity, Doherty and his fellow constables prepared to defend their station from the American MPs and violence certainly would have resulted had not the "Provost Marshal blinked and after a period of eye-balling each other...led his men away."<sup>120</sup> Shortly thereafter, the American prisoner was processed in the usual way and handed over to the American authorities.<sup>121</sup>

Doherty's story reinforces the impression that relations in Cairns were perhaps the least harmonious in Queensland. That a US provost marshal contemplated breaking one of his own men out of the town's gaol indicates that even high-ranking members of the

---

<sup>118</sup> Denis Doherty, "Policing Cairns and the North," *Vedette Magazine: The Journal of Queensland Police Service*, October 1995, 20.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

US forces contributed to the poor relations with state police. Moreover, the initial brawl signifies that American MPs, rather than policing their countrymen, came to their aid when they clashed with Australians. For some MPs it was not “police versus rowdy servicemen” but “Americans versus Australians.” Although Doherty was recounting events fifty years after they occurred, his story is supported by other examples of conflict between the police forces at Cairns. One must wonder how many similar incidents occurred which did not make their way into written records but were known only to the actors involved.

### **Claims of Police Brutality**

US military authorities, driven more by national loyalty and *esprit de corps* than a duty to police American servicemen, were not always to blame for strains that existed in their relationship with state police. Several reports exist whereby American personnel accused Queensland policemen of assault and using excessive force during arrests. These allegations undermined amicable relations for two reasons: American authorities self-evidently did not take kindly to their soldiers being assaulted by Queensland Police; and in cases where the claims of brutality were spurious, American authorities defended their own men and dropped any notion of punishment. State police saw this as another example of the US military closing ranks to protect their own.

One example of alleged police brutality occurred in Brisbane in February 1943, when a car nearly sideswiped William Penn and his girlfriend. Because the car made no effort to avoid a collision, the American officer slapped the driver in the face while he

drove past. Unfortunately for the American, the driver was Police Constable M. Nichol. After the near accident, the constable with the help of two Brisbane policemen, who were on beat-duty nearby, bundled Penn into his car.<sup>122</sup> From Penn's account, what followed was a savage beating. Upon entering one of the city's police stations, Nichol punched the American in the face and body. After this assault, police led Penn to another room where policemen beat him again. This attack lasted several minutes and in Penn's recollection the Australians cursed him and told him that he "had picked the wrong man this time."<sup>123</sup> After the beating ended, they released Penn and handed him over to the American MPs about an hour after his abduction.<sup>124</sup>

Following the incident, Penn's first impression was that the attack "had been planned or was a regular procedure."<sup>125</sup> Though we only have his version of events, his account was probably true. His girlfriend corroborated his story up to his removal by constables, and she swore that he did not resist when taken into custody. She added that there was "no trouble of any kind before he entered the car."<sup>126</sup> Considering an American investigation concluded he suffered a swollen lip and a ruptured ear drum, it is likely that Penn told the truth about his run in with Queensland Police.<sup>127</sup>

Colonel Harry Vaughan, the US provost marshal in Brisbane, believed Penn's story and wrote Commissioner Carroll a week after the incident. Though Vaughan acknowledged that claims of police brutality were often dubious, he believed the Penn

---

<sup>122</sup> "Affidavit of William R. Penn," 08 February, 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> "Affidavit of Elsie Liebke," 02 February 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>127</sup> "Investigation Report," Sergeant John Rizzieri, 07 February 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

case proved the exception. Vaughan took on a diplomatic tone in his letter and even acknowledged that Penn's slap had provoked Constable Nichol and that he would be punished accordingly.<sup>128</sup> That Carroll chose not to reply to Vaughan in writing suggests that, if he did anything, the Commissioner went through unofficial channels when looking into the incident. It is also possible that he chose to ignore the episode altogether. National and group loyalties cut both ways.

The evidence tells us that Brisbane policemen beat Penn. Other claims of police brutality are harder to substantiate. Some accusations were certainly false and concocted to conceal wrongdoings and avoid punishment. In August 1943, two American soldiers were arrested for disorderly conduct, obscene language, and resisting arrest. These soldiers, George Harris and Ralph Jacoby, were the ringleaders of a crowd of drunken Americans cutting loose in Bundaberg. They were responsible for inciting the crowd against a policeman who was questioning another GI about a broken window. When Harris and Jacoby were arrested, they resisted violently and called upon their comrades for assistance. The situation became so desperate that one police sergeant drew his pistol to stay the crowd; Harris and Jacoby were later brought to the town's watchhouse where they spent the night. American authorities picked them up the next day.<sup>129</sup>

The incident would have likely ended there except that six days later both soldiers complained that they had been beaten. Harris maintained that one policeman had pulled a gun on Jacoby and that another had slapped them on the way to the station. He also claimed that police had thrown him and Jacoby into a cell after a Constable Cook

---

<sup>128</sup> H.H. Vaughan to Commissioner Carroll, 08 February 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>129</sup> O.L. Smith to Sub-Inspector of Police, 12 August 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

punched Jacoby in the stomach. According to the American, the police even refused requests for cigarettes and water.<sup>130</sup> Jacoby's account was nearly identical to Harris's, but in his version he was kicked in the groin; he also declared that the police sergeant had poked him in the back with a gun and threatened to shoot him.<sup>131</sup>

The incident touched off a minor row between the state police and American authorities. The commanding officer sided with his men and informed Queensland Police that they would receive no punishment because of the beating. Furthermore, the officer requested that a "protest be registered with the proper Queensland Police Headquarters against the manhandling."<sup>132</sup> The policemen involved in the incident defended their actions and disputed the Americans' version of events. Detective Sergeant Smith denied the claim that he pointed his gun at Jacoby and threatened to shoot him. That Detective Constable Cook punched Jacoby in the stomach was also a lie according to the sergeant. He maintained that he did not accompany the soldiers to their cell, but whatever force his colleagues used to put the Americans inside was necessary to overcome "any resistance that they may have made at the time."<sup>133</sup> Another arresting constable confirmed Smith's account, denying that the American was ever hit in the stomach or that unnecessary force was used.<sup>134</sup>

It is impossible to confirm what really happened after the Americans' arrests. However, Cook's report suggests that the police were telling the truth. The sergeant hypothesized in his report that the Americans "deliberately got together and concocted a

---

<sup>130</sup> "Affidavit of George H. Harris," 09 August 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>131</sup> "Affidavit of Ralph G. Jacoby," 09 August 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>132</sup> Myron J. Green to Commanding Officer, 11 August 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>133</sup> O.L. Smith to Sub-Inspector of Police, 12 August 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>134</sup> M. Blackadder to Sub-Inspector of Police, 22 August 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.



story to make their own case better and to endeavour to direct aspersions against the Police, by falsely accusing them of wrongful detention” and ill treatment.<sup>135</sup> More significantly, Cook recounted how four days before the Americans made their accusations, he met with their commanding officer in connection to an unrelated matter. A Captain Green was ignorant of his men’s arrest until Cook told him of it. The Queensland sergeant argued strongly that the Americans’ silence undermined their story, as they “had not been sufficiently incensed at their alleged ill-treatment to make any complaint to their Commanding Officer.”<sup>136</sup> The constable also surmised that Jacoby and Harris did not want their commanding officer to know of their arrest and concocted their story when Green became curious about the incident.<sup>137</sup> In concluding his report, Cook maintained “the allegations of these men are completely groundless, and I have no doubt they have all got together and prepared their stories in order to mitigate the seriousness of their own conduct, and gain the sympathy of their Captain.”<sup>138</sup>

The district’s inspector of police supported his subordinates’ version of events; after reviewing the incident he told Commissioner Carroll that he believed the police and not the Americans. Although he criticised the police for their handling of the initial incident, he agreed with Cook’s analysis because the Americans waited five days to make their complaint over their alleged ill treatment. The inspector believed that “in all probability no such complaint would have been made by them if it was not due to the fact that their Commanding Officer...apparently became curious after his conversation with

---

<sup>135</sup> H.G. Cook to Sub-Inspector of Police, 22 August 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

Det. Constable Cook.”<sup>139</sup> The incident embittered relations in the town. American authorities did not look fondly on the alleged mistreatment of their men, while local police felt aggrieved.

Another example of alleged police brutality occurred in January 1944 when a senior US shore patrol officer reported that two constables beat American sailors K.S. Sly and G.H. Boucher after their arrest for fighting an Australian soldier in South Brisbane. One American officer observed that when Sly arrived at the shore patrol headquarters, he was unconscious, wearing bloodstained clothes, vomiting blood, and his head was badly bruised. After receiving emergency medical treatment, the sailor underwent a medical examination where it was revealed that he had suffered a broken nose, a fractured jaw, and a cracked skull. Illustrating the gravity of the situation, Commissioner Carroll was phoned at his home and notified of the alleged treatment of the two sailors. The officer concluded that the behaviour of the police was “a radical departure from the custom obtained heretofore.”<sup>140</sup>

Also present at the headquarters was shore patrol officer Howard Wood, who noted Boucher had suffered what appeared to be a severe beating. He reported that Boucher repeated over and over that he and Sly were handcuffed together and then punched and kicked. After witnessing the sailors’ arrival at the headquarters, Wood went immediately to Brisbane’s west end police station where he interrogated the constables suspected of giving the beatings. According to Wood, the constables suspiciously insisted on relaying their version of events together. When questioned why they did not

---

<sup>139</sup> Inspector of Police to Commissioner of Police, 13 September 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>140</sup> Senior Shore Patrol Officer to Commanding Officer, 20 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

arrest the Australian who participated in the original disturbance, the constables answered that it had been impossible to do so because the sailors resisted arrest. During Wood's interrogation, the constables denied that they had struck the sailors once they were at the station.<sup>141</sup> However, the shore patrolman's observations put in doubt the constables' version of events:

On the floor of the station there were several spots of blood and a large space of approximately four [feet] by two [feet] that had been freshly mopped. This was clearly evident. [Constable] Cook, upon seeing me looking at the blood on the floor produced a mop and started to do more mopping. The mop was covered with blood. Cook knew that I observed this so he immediately took the mop into another room and placed it out of sight.<sup>142</sup>

After leaving the station, Wood sought out a civilian witness who had seen the episode and his observations lent further credence to the Americans' accusations.<sup>143</sup>

Significantly, this civilian told Wood that the sailors had had no blood on their uniforms and had not struggled on their way to the police station. He told Wood that he did not see the constables strike the sailors with their fists or batons and he accompanied Wood to the scene of the arrest and confirmed that there was no blood on the ground or footpath.<sup>144</sup> The witness's statement also offered some insight as to why the constables might have beaten the Americans: both sailors resisted violently when the constables attempted to break up the initial fight.<sup>145</sup>

The sailors' version of events absolved themselves of any blame. Sly claimed that one of the constables put a strangle hold on him without provocation, while Boucher

---

<sup>141</sup> Lt. Howard T. Wood to Senior Shore Patrol Officer, 20 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. Wood was given the witness's name and address at the police station.

<sup>144</sup> "Statement of John Alfred Johnson," 20 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

stated that a constable attacked him.<sup>146</sup> Boucher even maintained that after the constables handcuffed him and Sly they “picked us up and let everyone in the crowd take a punch at us without making no [sic] effort to stop them.”<sup>147</sup> Even though they exculpated themselves from any wrongdoing, details in the sailors’ statements supported the shore patrol’s conclusion that they were assaulted. For instance, Sly stated that after they were beaten for some time and then made to get off the floor so the constables could mop up the blood that had collected there.<sup>148</sup>

The shore patrol brought the sailors’ allegations to the attention of the Queensland Police, who conducted their own investigation. Unsurprisingly, when questioned, the constables denied that they had beaten the sailors. They assured one investigator that “any injuries they [Sly and Boucher] were suffering from, were sustained during the fight with the [Australian] soldier or in the course of their arrest.”<sup>149</sup> As well, the constables claimed that the sailors were only slightly injured. The police also found several witnesses including the Australian soldier from the original brawl.<sup>150</sup> According to the south coast district’s inspector of police, these witnesses corroborated the constables’ story that the Americans violently resisted arrest and even fought the officers. Furthermore, the Australian from the original fight admitted that he punched Sly in the head when one of the constables was attempting to restrain the American. The inspector told Commissioner Carroll that this was the origin of Sly’s injuries. According to the

---

<sup>146</sup> “Statement of A.S. Sly,” 20 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034; “Statement of O.H. Boucher,” 20 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> “Statement of A.S. Sly,” 20 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>149</sup> Sergeant Allen to the Inspector of Police, 21 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

constables, Sly threw himself to the ground while handcuffed to Boucher at the police station. It was speculated that this was where the sailors sustained further injuries.<sup>151</sup>

In his final analysis, the Queensland Police inspector dismissed the sailors' story, claiming that they gave "an untruthful account of the occurrence and obviously exaggerated the facts of what did actually occur."<sup>152</sup> Boucher appeared to have suffered no serious injury and Sly when interviewed five days after the episode "showed no outward sign of injury other than a blood-shot left eye."<sup>153</sup> The fact that Sly was sitting up in bed during his interview confirmed for the inspector that his injuries were hardly serious.<sup>154</sup> Queensland Police concluded that unnecessary force was not used and there was inadequate evidence to charge the officers with assault or discipline them for a breach of police rules.<sup>155</sup> It is impossible to conclude for certain if the Americans were beaten or not. However, the incident is revealing about relations between the Queensland Police and the US military. Authorities from both sides ultimately supported their own men's version of events. National loyalties meant that both sides almost instinctively dismissed claims of their men's wrongdoing. Rather than co-operating to control the behaviour of American servicemen, these incidents encouraged an "us versus them" mentality.

American authorities in Innisfail lodged similar claims of police brutality in relation to the arrest of three sailors in August 1944. This incident offers another example of poor relations between Queensland Police and the US military in the Cairns

---

<sup>151</sup> Inspector of Police to Commissioner of Police, 17 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

area. Earlier efforts to improve relations in the district had come to nought. According to Innisfail Police, the trouble began when a group of US ratings were seen swearing and harassing local civilians. The police ordered them to stop; the ratings ignored them. In fact the highest-ranking sailor in the group ridiculed the warning, which encouraged his comrades.<sup>156</sup>

The sailors continued to use obscene language and harass pedestrians; one of the sailors, Walter Vail, was particularly vulgar. He was arrested but resisted violently, which prompted another sailor to cry out “[t]hose fucking cock suckers won’t take my buddy” and attack the policemen.<sup>157</sup> A constable attempted to arrest Vail but he resisted fiercely. According to one Sub-Inspector Selby, Vail attempted to strike him, but missed, fell, and cracked his face on the sidewalk. With Vail dazed from his fall, the sub-inspector subdued him and brought him to the police station with the help of two American sailors. Vail’s accomplice, and another American who joined the fray, were also arrested and brought to the station with the help of an Australian civilian.<sup>158</sup>

Shortly after the arrests, Chief Ormond Roberts arrived at the police station and claimed that he was in charge of the sailors. Because of their drunken state, the chief thought it prudent to keep the men locked up overnight; he told the sub-inspector he would come back the next day with a letter of authority from his commanding officer to effect the sailors’ release.<sup>159</sup> The following morning, Roberts returned to the station and

---

<sup>156</sup> Sub-Inspector Selby to Inspector of Police, 20 September 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. As explained above, many sailors attempted to free their mates by pretending to be officers. As a result, a *modus vivendi* was established in Cairns whereby American COs would give a list of responsible persons to the state police in the town.

agreed that the sailors should appear before the Magistrates Court and then be released into his custody.<sup>160</sup>

After their release, the sailors provided American authorities with a version of events that conflicted with Sub-Inspector Selby's account; the Americans claimed they were handled roughly and Vail maintained that one constable kicked him in the face while he was on the ground.<sup>161</sup> The sailors' commanding officer, R.W. Fish, heard about the incident and reported that "[s]tatements of the accused men, together with corroborative evidence furnished by witnesses, indicate brutal treatment inflicted, above and beyond necessary force, by both arresting Officers and Civilians."<sup>162</sup> Fish concluded that while he did not defend the "intoxication and dissipation" of his men, he believed "that antagonism toward the servicemen was evident on the part of the police prior to any arrest."<sup>163</sup> Because of the behaviour of the police, Fish decided that "Innisfail should be out of bounds while such conditions prevail."<sup>164</sup>

The US naval commander in Cairns, Commander S.E. Kenney, also supported the sailors after he read Fish's report. Kenney wrote to Inspector Mullally and maintained he "noticed an increasing tendency on the part of the police to use unnecessary force" when arresting American servicemen.<sup>165</sup> The commander feared that if such behaviour continued, it would be difficult for him to persuade commanding officers to punish their men when they committed crimes. To impress upon the police that he meant what he

---

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Commander R.W. Fish to Commander S.E. Kenney 11 September 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Commander S.E. Kenney to Inspector Mullally, 11 September 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

said, Kenney revealed that the sailors would not be punished because of the alleged beatings.<sup>166</sup>

Kenney's protest went down poorly with the state police whose reaction illustrates just how far relations had deteriorated in the area. Sub-Inspector Selby first denied that the Americans were ill treated in any way. With regard to Vail's allegations of being kicked, Selby attributed his injuries to falling on the ground and cracking his head.<sup>167</sup> Commander Fish's accusations that the police were antagonistic towards the sailors angered the sub-inspector. According to Selby, Fish based his "opinion on evidence from witnesses who must have been the Sailors arrested...who were more or less under the influence of liquor at the time...against the evidence of two members of the Civilian Police, who were sober."<sup>168</sup> In reaction to Fish's decision to bar the Americans from Innisfail, the sub-inspector agreed with the American but for different reasons: "Innisfail would be far better off from a Police point of view if it were placed out of bounds to the members of the American Navy, unless their Commanding Officer would do his duty and see that a competent Officer be placed in charge of such Personnel when on leave in Innisfail."<sup>169</sup> Relations had deteriorated seriously, as Americans were unruly and out of control on a daily basis.<sup>170</sup> Finally, Selby dismissed the complaints of brutality as untrue and prejudiced.<sup>171</sup> These were not words intended to foster trust and co-operation.

---

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Sub-Inspector Selby to Inspector of Police, 20 September 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.



Inspector Mullally, in his report to Commissioner Carroll considered the Americans' accusations apocryphal. He noted that civilian witnesses debunked the sailors' version of events. According to the inspector "[n]o more force than was necessary was used to convey [the sailors] to the Watch-House. In fact, if the civilians had not assisted the Police they would have been in for a rough time and no doubt would have been severely injured."<sup>172</sup> The inspector was particularly damning of the American who was originally asked to calm down his shipmates. This sailor "could have prevented the happening if he had used his authority in the first instance," but instead he encouraged his comrades.<sup>173</sup> Mullally reported that he later "set himself out to get these offenders released from Custody by representing that he had the authority" to take the sailors into his custody.<sup>174</sup>

Mullally included in his report a summary of the general state of affairs in Innisfail and described a situation where civil authorities received no co-operation from the American navy in Cairns and its environs. The inspector reported that there was no shore patrol in Innisfail and consequently all policing duties fell upon the local police detachment. Moreover, the inspector complained that senior officers stationed at Cairns made no effort to visit the town or inquire about the conduct of their sailors. When commanding officers investigated breaches of the law, Mullally complained "there are no independent witnesses called – Police or Civilian. The Officer deals with them on the information at hand and their story. He invariably believes the Offender's story whatever

---

<sup>172</sup> Inspector Mullally to Commissioner of Police, 26 September 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

he chooses to tell, supported by his mates, and gives his decision accordingly.”<sup>175</sup>

Commander Kenney’s conduct was a case in point; Mullally reported the commander had never visited Innisfail or contacted the allegedly aggrieved sailors. Instead, in the inspector’s estimation, Kenney chose to “leave his responsibilities to someone else with regard to these happenings, and write from what he hears.”<sup>176</sup>

In his final analysis, the inspector told Carroll that he was convinced that the Americans had no cause for complaint. The problems with naval ratings in the town had only existed for the past six months because of the sailors’ poor discipline, the disinterest of their officers, and the lack of co-operation from senior officers at Cairns. In Mullally’s view, Kenney was to blame for the problems in the town because before “his advent to the position, all other American Base Commanders, Military and Naval, [had] shown splendid co-operation, and the discipline of all Americans could be classed as 95%.”<sup>177</sup>

The incident and Mullally’s assessment point to another example of American authorities protecting their own personnel. However, the problems in Innisfail and Cairns also offer a reason why police sometimes resorted to unjustified violence when policing GIs. Under provisions created at the height of officialdom (the National Security Regulations), Queensland Police could respond to complaints, make arrests, and charge US personnel. At that point, the American authorities removed offenders, sometimes for trial by court martial. However, it was apparent that charges were often dropped or trials never held. Police frustration in Innisfail was palpable. Perhaps using “rough justice”

---

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

was one way state police ensured that Americans received some form of punishment. The above crisis and other claims of police abuse indicate that constables had little to fear. Senior police officials were loyal to their men and defended them from claims of wrongdoing. National loyalty and *esprit de corps* help explain Australian behaviour as well.

The police in Innisfail could not tolerate the behaviour of the American forces. Commissioner Carroll supported their position and reported the situation to Admiral C.C. Glover in Brisbane. He informed the Admiral that relations between the US Navy and state police were unsatisfactory in the Cairns area. In his letter, Carroll remained diplomatic, stating that state police “would much prefer to have the full co-operation and support of all members of the fighting services...rather than that we should have to even temporarily enforce the law against any individual member of such services.”<sup>178</sup> In relation to the incident in Innisfail, the commissioner hinted that the Americans’ version of events was false. He remarked that because the state police never carried guns before the war and only carried batons at night, constables were trained to use their heads rather than their hands when enforcing the law. The commissioner insisted that his men used force only when absolutely necessary, although the remark about batons points to a probable source of allegations of brutality. Glover was told that it was unfortunate that the American naval authorities in the Cairns area did not understand that “the use of force in order to overcome resistance is essential, and if the person offering such resistance

---

<sup>178</sup> Commissioner of Police to Admiral Glover, 11 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

happens to become injured in such circumstances, in the final analysis he has himself to blame.”<sup>179</sup>

The commissioner saw the incident at Innisfail as a symptom of a wider problem in the Cairns district that had to be resolved. Carroll asked for the admiral’s help in “ensuring more amicable relations between US naval personnel and the civil powers in the Cairns Police District.”<sup>180</sup> To effect this improvement, the commissioner proposed a conference between the senior naval officer in Cairns and civil authorities.<sup>181</sup> American naval authorities did not take up Commissioner Carroll’s offer and problems were never resolved. The problems lost urgency because the American presence continued to decline in the area and Australia as a whole. By the end of 1944 there were only 5,500 army personnel servicemen stationed in all of Base Section Two, down from a peak of 26,000 in June 1943.<sup>182</sup> Moreover, with all of New Guinea in Allied hands, Australia’s strategic importance was on the wane.

## Conclusion

Relations between US and Queensland civil authorities were less than ideal during the American occupation. The recorded jurisdictional disputes, though few in number and often petty, reveal Australian frustration over the behaviour of US personnel, American arrogance, and indifference to Australian law. Queensland officials were unwilling to bend local laws for the sake of wartime expediency and that irritated the US

---

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 30.

military. American authorities believed winning the war overshadowed any local concerns or complaints over GI behaviour; however, this attitude was blended with an urge to protect “our boys.” The consequent jurisdictional disagreements worked their way up the chain of command on both sides. American officials were especially angered at an Australian effort to challenge US extra-territorial jurisdiction. Australia might have been an ally that hosted tens of thousands of US personnel; however, the Americans insisted on American military justice for American personnel. The American presence was a friendly occupation, but it was an occupation nonetheless.

The sharing of policing duties created additional friction between Queensland Police and the US military. Here a general ignorance of the NSR played a role in undermining sound relations between police forces. Low ranking American military police, especially shore patrolmen, often had no idea that their GIs or ratings were accountable to Australian law and did not know that state police had the authority to arrest and detain Americans. The nature of the American occupation helps explain this ignorance. Personnel were constantly flowing through Australia, staying for a few days or weeks, or visiting on leave. There was little opportunity to become acquainted with procedures and the American command had dismissed Australian suggestions to educate American personnel about Australia and its people.

Individual American MPs and shore patrolmen undermined relations because they chose to ignore the behaviour of their comrades and shield them from arrest and justice. Rather than co-operating with Queensland Police, who, in American eyes, were not “one of us,” MPs and shore patrolmen shared a protective indifference to the GIs’ misdeeds.

This unwillingness to hold subordinates accountable erupted in cases of police brutality. Some GIs, hoping their officers would support their version of events, created spurious stories of brutality to escape punishment and hide misconduct, but the state police on occasion did beat American prisoners. It is impossible to discern the frequency of these incidents. Knowing that GIs escaped prosecution and penalty probably motivated constables to dispense rough justice. They received no formal reprimands for this behaviour; senior police authorities closed ranks and protected their constables because they were “one of us.” State police embraced group loyalty as readily as their American counterparts. Despite sharing the common purpose of winning the war in the Pacific, those who had to live with the policies created from above often found co-operation difficult in practice. Jurisdictional disputes and relations between police services were not the only instances where efforts to manage relations had mixed results or were ignored by GIs and Australian civilians. They also ignored policies that tried to manage gender relations, as we will see in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO – MANAGING SEXUAL RELATIONS IN WARTIME: AMERICAN SOLDIERS AND AUSTRALIAN WOMEN**

Given the size of the American presence and the fact that personnel were often stationed in or visited urban centres, sexual relations between GIs and Australian women were widespread and unavoidable. Like other aspects of the occupation, gender relations were complex and defy brief generalization. Associations were platonic, romantic, and purely sexual. As we shall see in chapter five, relations sometimes took a violent turn; a few women were the victims of crimes perpetrated by US personnel. Relations between Australian women and GIs varied in relation to individual actors. As Michael Sturma notes “the American presence could be a negative as well as a positive experience for the women themselves.”<sup>1</sup> Whether positive or negative, the mere fact that there were relations created problems for US military and Australian authorities, because at the outset of the American occupation both sets of authorities endeavoured to regulate relations. In keeping with one of the themes of this thesis – namely that a clash of cultures brought about by war led to problems that prompted management from officialdom – this chapter looks at the trouble created when American men socialized with Australian women. More than the management of sexuality was involved; Australian authorities – especially in Queensland – had an established and intrusive way of handling prostitution and sexual relations generally. Race too was an object of surveillance. The arrival of American men looking for companionship or excitement

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Sturma, , “Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942-1945,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 24 (May 1989): 4.

collided with a state establishment used to supervising the conduct of young women and regulating contact between whites and Aboriginals.

This discussion confines itself to heterosexual intimacies; however it recognizes that these were not the only relations military authorities attempted to manage.

Homosexual relations were also a concern. Allan Bérubé states in *Coming Out Under Fire* that military officials expanded anti-homosexual policies during the war and either discharged personnel when their homosexuality became known or tried to “reclaim” them.<sup>2</sup> Although lesbians were not subjected to the same scrutiny as gay men, Leisa D. Meyer maintains that some lesbian members of the Women’s Army Corps were treated harshly and discharged from the service. More commonly, lesbianism was controlled through shifting personnel and room assignments and transferring women to other units.<sup>3</sup>

In any event, American officials in Australia sometimes promoted policies that complimented the surveillance ethos of Australian authorities. They wanted their men focused on the war and representing Uncle Sam positively while in Australia. They also wanted to limit American liabilities arising from sexual relations. Realistically however, they had to accept that relations between the sexes were inevitable and could not be neatly ordered. As David Reynolds notes in *Rich Relations* “[s]ex was usually the preoccupation of unoccupied armies...Aside from the satisfaction of sexual drives, female company was an antidote to the all-male environment, an expression of personal

---

<sup>2</sup> Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 4, 275.

<sup>3</sup> Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women’s Army Corps During World War II* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1996) 152, 159.



freedom, and balm for the dehumanizing rituals of army life.”<sup>4</sup> Historically army commanders have considered relationships between their soldiers and women as problematic: “on the one hand, most took an attitude of what they considered robust common sense, namely that “basic male urges” must be satisfied. On the other hand, they have usually regarded woman as a threat to military discipline and effectiveness.”<sup>5</sup> The need to keep morale up in a mass conscript army coupled with the fear that certain relations could undermine the efficiency of American soldiers meant that Australian and American officials accepted and even encouraged some sexual relations (prostitution) while dissuading others (marriage). They attempted to maintain a semblance of control since they could not have accepted a laissez-faire approach to sexual relations. Consequently, the history of sexual relations during the occupation reveals a fluid, evolving set of policies that always retained a will to manage and control as far as possible.

Prominent among the situations that prompted policies and management were marriages between American personnel and Australian women; the role American personnel sometimes played in breaking up Australian marriages; the “immoral” conduct of Australian women and GIs; the spread of sexual diseases; and relations between Aboriginal women and American soldiers. These affairs exercised Australian and American officialdom and created problems that precipitated attempts at management and control.

---

<sup>4</sup> David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-45* (London: Phoenix Press, 1996), 64.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

## Marrying the Yanks

GIs married thousands of Australian women. Official Australian statistics record nearly 6,000 marriages between 1942 and 1944. Nearly 3,000 took place in Queensland (chart 2:1).<sup>6</sup> Potts and Potts believe that official numbers are inaccurate and that the true figure is around 12,000 unions.<sup>7</sup> Marriage was a sensitive issue for American officials; it was a basic civilian right, but it could distract soldiers from their duty and hurt the war effort. Moreover, marriage emphasized the duality of American conscripts; they were concurrently soldiers and citizens. Reynolds argues that this duality has preoccupied army commanders historically:

In armies of occupation it is particularly difficult to prevent soldiers from reverting to civilians, because that is the nature of the surrounding society. Soldiers are being imposed on civilians, often quite directly as when they are billeted on a household...and the unoccupied soldier's propensity for female company has to be satisfied in some way.<sup>8</sup>

Nothing could expose this duality more than wartime marriages. Because of the fear of soldiers reverting to civilians, armies in the past have “tried to prohibit or dissuade their men from contracting marital relationships especially while on duty abroad.”<sup>9</sup> During the Depression, marriages in the US army were only allowed when a soldier-applicant obtained his commanding officer's permission and demonstrated that he could support his dependents. This policy continued into the 1940s and was applied in Australia.

On 20 February 1942, Major General Julian C. Barnes, commander of the United States Army Forces in Australia (USAFIA), sent a memorandum to all base section

---

<sup>6</sup> Commonwealth Department of Information, *Australia in Facts and Figures*, vol. 9 (Canberra, 1945), 26.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under: The American Impact on Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), 362.

<sup>8</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 69.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

commanders specifying how they should handle marriage requests.<sup>10</sup> The memorandum stated that

[a]s a matter of policy to govern the action of troops on Australian soil, it is the desire of the Commanding General that all commanding officers, when presented with a request by men of their command for permission to marry, use their utmost influence to discourage any such plans on the part of American soldiers during the period of war.<sup>11</sup>

The policy in Australia was no different from that in mainland America. Soldiers were not barred from marrying, only strongly discouraged. Barnes's superiors in Washington had reasonable grounds for doing so. Foremost among these was the fact that they believed marriages undermined the war effort. It was further alleged that marriages were unfair to prospective brides:

Action on the part of any soldier to institute family life in the field, and thus create a moral obligation, is not only unfair to the wife but a burden to the soldier and all those concerned in his welfare – both Army and Civilian – at a time when the soldier is already under obligation to give his services without restriction and without family ties for the duration of the emergency.<sup>12</sup>

Australian marriages also created their own unique problems. Barnes's memorandum noted that once it was time for a married serviceman to return home, it would be impossible for his wife to accompany him; she would have to book her own passage to the United States. Moreover, American immigration restrictions also complicated

---

<sup>10</sup> In the chaos of early 1942, there were many changes in the command structure of the US forces in Australia until MacArthur's arrival in March. Thus, General Barnes was initially in command of US forces in the country, only to be supplanted by Lieutenant General George Brett. MacArthur took over command on 11 March 1942 and became Supreme Commander of the Southwest Pacific Area a month later. See Joseph Bykofsky and Harold Larson, *United States Army in World War II, The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas* (Washington DC, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1957), 426-29.

<sup>11</sup> B.H. Fitch to Commanding Officers, All Base Sections, United States Forces in Australia, 20 February 1942, National Archives and Records Administration II (NARA II) (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

marriages between Australian women and American personnel. Wives had to obtain permission to enter the country from the United States Immigration Service and it had to “be clearly shown to American Consular Agencies and American Immigration Authorities that the husband has adequate means for the support of his wife, and that she will not become a public charge. This may be difficult to do, and the disappointment of both parties concerned needs no further explanations.”<sup>13</sup> The memo ended with the order to base section commanders to disseminate the information throughout their commands.<sup>14</sup>

Only six days later, in late February 1942, policy makers in the War Department reversed themselves and allowed soldiers to marry without the permission of their commander. What had happened? Simply stated, as the makeup of the US forces changed (from a small volunteer force to a mass conscript army), it became difficult to justify marriage restrictions. Volunteers knew that their decision to join would entail certain sacrifices; conscripts, however, were pressed into service. Denying them the right to marry would highlight their status as draftees and sap morale. In addition, as the army expanded into the millions, army planners knew that restrictions on marriage would be hard to enforce.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, this new liberalization did not mean that authorities in Australia gave their personnel carte blanche when it came to marriage. Many GIs did not even learn of the change in policy and officers still actively discouraged marriage. On April

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 209.

15, the *Courier Mail* ran a story with the headline: “U.S. Soldiers Told Not to Marry Here, Now.” The paper reported that US commanders in Australia were doing “everything in their power” to dissuade American personnel from marrying Australian women while they were still members of the US armed forces.<sup>16</sup> A June 03 memorandum from Commander R.L. Hicks to the crew of the USS Phoenix explains what this meant in practice. His memo railed against crewmembers who even considered marriage. Commander Hicks believed his men had no idea what they were getting themselves into by marrying Australian girls in wartime. Accordingly, like a misogynist father, he set out to educate them on the perils of marriage. He placed the consequences of wartime unions in the worst possible light, certainly with the goal of nipping betrothals in the bud.<sup>17</sup>

Commander Hicks first stressed that marriage constituted a binding civil contract that tied the husband to his wife for the rest of his life. Nothing could excuse the husband of his duty to uphold this contract, save for divorce in Hicks’s view. He told his men that marriage rendered unavoidable financial obligations on the husband. He would have to pay his wife’s passage to America and wait upwards to a year for her to be allowed to immigrate; the husband was also responsible for supporting his wife (and children) regardless of where he was. If he tried to avoid his financial responsibilities, Hicks warned, “the good old consular service will follow you right around the world.”<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> *Courier Mail* (Brisbane), 15 April 1942.

<sup>17</sup> R.L. Hicks, “Memorandum for All Hands,” 03 June 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

In the event that a regretful husband decided to desert his wife, Hicks pointed out that the latter could sue for divorce or separate maintenance. In either case, the court (Hicks does not state which) could force the husband to pay financial support. The commander warned his men to not “get the idea that when you leave Australia you leave all that behind” because a wife could pursue her husband through the US consulate. In a memorable phrase, Hicks warned his men “you can’t leave her behind and you can’t get rid of her.”<sup>19</sup>

The commander also warned that a wife’s entry into the United States created a new set of problems, as she might feel like a “duck out of water...your family might not like her...she might not, when you get settled, compare favourably with girls you previously have known, and again you could do nothing about it.”<sup>20</sup> Hicks concluded with the warning that the “man will be held strictly responsible for the obligation which he undertakes when he marries in this area.”<sup>21</sup> As we shall see below, many of Hicks’s warnings were not based in fact. In particular, American soldiers sometimes abandoned their wives, and Australian women had little success in tracking them down, let alone getting money from them. The consular service would not hound men on behalf of abandoned wives. Hicks’s advice was meant to limit impulsive weddings.

On 08 June 1942, the War Department reversed heading again and rescinded its liberal marriage policy. The department published Circular 179, which declared “[n]o military personnel on duty in any foreign country or possession may marry without the

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

approval of the commanding officer of the United States Army Forces stationed in such foreign country or possession.”<sup>22</sup> American forces in Australia learned of this policy shortly thereafter; Adjutant General L.S. Ostrander circulated the new policy on June 30. Ostrander added that commanders had to continue to do their utmost to discourage marriages by citing potential problems with immigration and obstacles to the transportation of war brides to the United States. In addition, the adjutant general stressed that servicemen who married without permission were subject to disciplinary action “for violation of standing orders under the 96<sup>th</sup> Article of War.”<sup>23</sup> When soldiers did receive approval for marriage, Ostrander’s memorandum noted the bride and groom had to sign a statement that absolved the US government of any responsibility for transporting the wife or dependents to America after the war.<sup>24</sup> In light of this waiver, it appears that the War Department had been struggling in early 1942 to find a policy that gave some latitude to citizen soldiers while, at the same time, limited the financial exposure of the US government.

It is worth mentioning that with regard to transporting dependents, the War Department modified this policy in May 1944. Dependents were not officially barred from taking army transports to America, but such transportation was considered impractical so long as the war continued and shipping was needed for military purposes. The Secretary of War spelled out this policy, stating that “dependents of military personnel will be furnished transportation to the United States or from one theatre to

---

<sup>22</sup> L.S. Ostrander, “Memorandum No. 142, Marriage of Military Personnel,” 30 June 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

another...whenever the military situation and other factors justify such action in the opinion of the theatre commander or commanders concerned.”<sup>25</sup>

In any event, it was not just marriages in Australia that drove the War Department’s new policy. As Reynolds notes in *Rich Relations*, gaining the permission of one’s commanding officer “became the cornerstone of a widespread Army policy to discourage GI marriages to British women by almost all means possible.”<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, Reynolds maintains that events in Trinidad actually spurred the War Department to revert to the previous policy. Under the 1940 Destroyers for Bases Agreement, the Americans had established a base on the Caribbean island and some white soldiers had married black Trinidadians. According to one American officer, Circular 179 “was designed to protect soldiers from hasty marriages in countries where the bulk of the population was negro and socially and mentally inferior to the average American soldier.”<sup>27</sup>

Whatever the origins of Circular 179, its purpose in the Australian context, like that in Great Britain, was to limit marriages. The US Navy had an even stricter marriage policy. Only officers and petty officers above a certain rank could marry and in the spring of 1942, Admiral Herbert F. Leary ordered that all sailors who applied to marry had to observe a six-month “cooling down” period. After the six months passed, a would-be husband could reapply to marry. This policy effectively dampened the ardour of many sailors. Rear Admiral Carey Jones told members of the American and Australian press in January 1944 that fifty percent of those who applied to marry failed to

---

<sup>25</sup> Robert H. Dunlop to The Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, 20 May 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1.

<sup>26</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 210.

<sup>27</sup> Dep. CG to C/S 10 March 1943, RG 332 ETO AG GR CGC 291.1, quoted in Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 210.



resubmit their requests after the six-month waiting period.<sup>28</sup> Why did this policy only apply to the navy given its effectiveness? The six-month “cooling off” period would have been impossible to enforce on mainland Australia given the size and dispersal of army personnel. With fewer personnel stationed in Australia, high transiency rates, and a contained environment aboard ship, the navy could enforce a six-month waiting period and expect it to deter many unions.

It was not only American authorities who wished to limit marriages; a few Australians spoke in favour of limitations as well.<sup>29</sup> Roman Catholic Archbishop James Duhig, the powerful and conservative holder of the Brisbane See, called for a ban on marriages between GIs and Australian women for the duration of the war.<sup>30</sup> Support for Duhig’s proposal was marginal among Australians. The Commonwealth Government never considered his proposal because it realized that a ban on marriages would be unenforceable.<sup>31</sup> It probably would have been unpopular as well. Most Australians were not against marriages to Americans per se, particularly when the couples seemed practical and happy; instead, they wished to know how US authorities were going to deal with problems unhappy marriages occasionally created. Also, a few leaders of women’s organization wondered how Australian women would be treated in law and by American authorities. On 29 April 1942, Erna Keighley, President of the United Associations of Women (UAW), wrote to US authorities concerning the status of new Australian brides. Since her organization was “concerned with the care and protection of women and girls,”

---

<sup>28</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 331; *Courier Mail*, 20 January 1944.

<sup>29</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 320.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 334.

Keighley asked what measures the US military had “made for the status and maintenance of Australian girls who marry American soldiers and any children they may have.”<sup>32</sup> In particular, the nationality of newly married women vexed Keighley because “Australian Nationality Laws do not permit a woman who marries to retain her nationality once she leaves the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Government...[and] American Nationality Laws do not automatically extend American nationality to women who marry American men.”<sup>33</sup> By marrying GIs, Keighley worried that Australian women would find themselves stateless. Keighley was wrong on the nationality question, but her concern about the legal status of Australian brides and their maintenance was genuine. She also wondered how the US military planned to transport Australian women to America after the war.<sup>34</sup>

About a month later, Keighley received a terse reply from Acting Adjutant General, George L. Dutton. She learned US military authorities had spent little time considering the nationality question or the transport of Australian war brides. Dutton did not even address the question of maintenance, but informed Keighley that official military policy was to discourage marriages. Keighley also learned that the nationality of Australian brides and their transportation to the US was not the responsibility of the US military in Australia. According to Dutton, “Australian girls who marry American soldiers at this time do so at their own risk. Marriage does not confer American citizenship, and their subsequent admission to the United States as aliens is wholly under

---

<sup>32</sup> Erna L. Keighley to Public Relations Officer, United States Army Headquarters, Victoria Barracks, 29 April 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Erna L. Keighley to Public Relations Officer, United States Army Headquarters, Victoria Barracks, 29 April 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1

the control of the United States Immigration Service.”<sup>35</sup> Dutton concluded his letter informing Keighley that the problems created by such marriages were not a pressing concern to the US forces in Australia and would likely be addressed after the war.<sup>36</sup>

Doubtless, Dutton used the exchange hoping that the UAW would warn women against serious romances with Americans. However, the information and its offhand presentation angered Keighley and the rest of the women’s group. Because of Dutton’s comments, another UAW member, Jessie Street, wrote directly to Eleanor Roosevelt. Roosevelt replied to Street in August 1942 and clarified that Australian war brides would be allowed entry to the US as wives of American citizens. In addition, she mentioned that American law had been changed to provide for the financial maintenance of women married to American servicemen. In June 1942, the Servicemen’s Dependence Allowance Act had passed into law. Under its provisions, the government deducted a portion of the husband’s monthly pay for his wife and combined it with an allotment from government coffers. For example, if a US private married an Australian woman, the federal government took twenty-two dollars from the GI’s monthly pay and added an additional twenty-eight dollars, giving a total of fifty dollars to the wife.<sup>37</sup>

Members of the UAW learned of the immigration status and maintenance of war brides, but such information did not filter down effectively to many Australians. Perhaps the War Department was not eager that it should and still worried about financial obligations. A reply to one Australian inquiry suggests that this was the case. In March

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 332.

1944, Queensland resident Robert Bousfield contacted the American Consul concerning the prospective marriage between his daughter and a US soldier. Bousfield had several questions for the consul: Did his daughter need his permission to marry even though she was over twenty-one? Was a GI husband compelled to provide a minimum payment for his wife? If there was no compulsion, could a soldier volunteer payments? Should his daughter be made a widow, would she receive a pension? Would any child be granted an allotment while the husband was still in the service? Finally, what was the nationality status of his daughter should she marry?<sup>38</sup>

The American Consul, Joseph Ragland, replied a few weeks later and provided an answer to the nationality question. According to the consul, Bousfield's daughter would not cease to be a British subject in the event of her marriage. He cited Section 18 of the Nationality Act which stated "where a woman has (whether before or after commencement of this Act) married an alien and was immediately before her marriage a British subject, she shall not, by reason only of her marriage, be deemed to have ceased to be a British subject unless by reason of her marriage she acquires the nationality of her husband."<sup>39</sup> According to Ragland, an Australian wife could only acquire US citizenship after obtaining an entry visa to the US and residing there for two years.<sup>40</sup>

Ragland forwarded Bousfield's letter on to Base Section Three in order to answer the Australian's questions pertinent to US army policy. On April 10, he received a reply from Adjutant General M.J. Conway. Conway spelled out military policy when it came

---

<sup>38</sup> Robert B. Bousfield to the American Consul, Brisbane, 14 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph P. Ragland to R.B. Bousfield, 03 April 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

to marriages: prospective husbands needed their commanding officer's permission, and they had to declare they were not already married. Moreover, Conway noted that personnel who married were given no "special consideration of any sort on account of family duties and responsibilities" and their wives were "not entitled to medical and dental services, baggage and transportation allowances or post exchange and commissary privileges."<sup>41</sup> Finally, Conway confirmed that GIs could make "allowances of pay" for their dependents in Australia.<sup>42</sup>

How did would-be brides and husbands react to efforts to limit marriages? Some soldiers backed away from taking the plunge, but others ignored the policy and turned a deaf ear to cautionary lectures from officers. Several episodes will personalize these actions and their consequences. In March 1943, serviceman Gus Nichols admitted to his commanding officer that he had married his pregnant girlfriend and was prepared to face a court martial because he did not have the consent of his commanding officer. Faced with a *fait accompli*, Nichols's superiors decided not to try him once they learned that his wife had given birth and she and her family appeared respectable. That the girl's mother also agreed to support her in the event of Nichols's death or incapacity helped persuade military authorities not to try the soldier.<sup>43</sup> Officers intruded into the lives of their men, even passing judgement on the respectability of a wife's family.

Intrusive paternalism was time-consuming and definitely not something that the state would engage in with the civilian population. The American authorities assumed, as

---

<sup>41</sup> M.J. Conway to R.B. Bourfield, 10 April 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> AG-E to AG, "Request for Permission to Marry," 12 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

a form of default position, that their young men were vulnerable and their actions could debilitate them emotionally, distract them from their combat roles, and put burdens on the US government. As it sometimes turned out, however, the intrusiveness of the Americans worked to protect Australians. Not every American serviceman seeking a female companion was naïve, let alone honest. Private Joseph F. Reynolds admitted to marrying Pauline Lloyd in March 1943. MPs arrested Reynolds for being AWOL and admitted him to hospital for a knee infection. Reynolds admitted under interrogation that “he neither obtained nor requested permission from military authorities to get married,” even though his company commander told him in July 1942 that he required permission.<sup>44</sup> Military authorities learned Reynolds had met his wife only two days before they decided to get married and were drunk during the ceremony. What made matters even more complicated was the fact that Reynolds had been married back home. He told the investigator that divorce proceedings had taken place, although he had no official record that a divorce had been granted. Military officials believed that a case could be made to try Reynolds for being AWOL or as a bigamist. At this stage in the war, with the defeat of the Japanese in New Guinea far from over, he was probably returned to his unit and received a summary punishment.<sup>45</sup>

Soldiers not only ignored official policy when it came to marriages; couples also might have conspired to achieve pregnancy to guarantee marriage approvals. Senior officers certainly believed that this was occurring. In June 1943, a letter from Adjutant

---

<sup>44</sup> James Bordley III to Commanding Officer, 118<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, 23 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

General M.J. Conway, which was sent to all base section commanders, observed that numerous marriages had been approved because of pregnancy. According to Conway, “[t]he increasing number of cases in this category is indicative of premeditated plans to produce this condition in order to secure permission to marry.”<sup>46</sup> Conway considered efforts to skirt military policy “prejudicial to the best interests of the service,” which necessitated a corresponding new policy. Specifically, if enlisted men admitted responsibility for impregnating Australian women, they would be reduced in rank and transferred immediately from their current location. Base section commanders were ordered to transfer offenders far enough away so “to render frequent visits impracticable.”<sup>47</sup> The officers’ suspicions plus a draconian reaction based on them must be seen as part of the military mind-set that required men to focus emotionally on loyalty to their unit. Australian women, from this perspective, constituted a threat to combat intensity. The conscripts and their officers found themselves in perplexing situations caused by sexual and romantic urges that pulled men toward domesticity and new attachments precisely at a time when their government wanted them to bond with other males. But there was much more involved here, as well.

The effort that went into the management of matrimony was even greater than described this far. Apart from the claim that the military wanted men to focus on their duties, the entire effort to control marriage also had a financial side. Before marriages were approved, US authorities investigated prospective brides and grooms. Investigators

---

<sup>46</sup> M.J. Conway to Commanding Generals All Base Sections, 07 May 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

ascertained whether American applicants were already married. This was but one aspect of the investigation process. Military authorities also investigated the financial status of both parties in order to ascertain if the prospective wife would have the means to support herself in the case of her husband's death. For instance, when serviceman Chester Judah applied to marry Greta Mudford, military authorities learned that Mudford's family had "ample income for her support."<sup>48</sup> In addition, investigators learned that Judah had three life insurance policies, investments worth thousands of dollars, war bonds, and thousands of dollars in cash.<sup>49</sup>

The US military also investigated the character of prospective brides. It did this with the help of the American Red Cross which probed the lives of Australian women.<sup>50</sup> In February 1943 for example, Peter G. Croes, a field director with the Red Cross interviewed Dorothy Dougherty at the request of Captain Julian Bardoff. Private Joseph Baker who was under Bardoff's command wished to marry Dougherty. In his report, Croes noted that the girl's parents were separated and that her mother and grandmother had raised her. In addition, the field director observed that Dougherty now lived in a boarding house that was "very shabby in appearance and upkeep."<sup>51</sup> In Croes's estimation, there was little to recommend the girl as "she did not appear intelligent for her

---

<sup>48</sup> "Statement of Information re Application for Permission to Marry," 28 June 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> The American Red Cross had a considerable presence in Australia from 1942. Not only did it provide care for the sick in wounded, but it also provided sleeping quarters and recreational facilities for GIs. See Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, esp. chap. 6.

<sup>51</sup> Peter G. Croes to Captain Julian L. Bardoff, 03 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.



age.”<sup>52</sup> However, the Red Cross director believed that a marriage should take place as soon as possible because of the woman’s obvious pregnancy. Croes added that the mother was amenable to a marriage.<sup>53</sup>

Croes provided military authorities with another report a few days later, this time in relation to the prospective marriage between Sergeant John Adams and Sydney woman Margaret Duff. Croes reported that Duff’s family was respectable and lived in a comfortable home in a pleasant neighbourhood. Authorities learned that Duff had attended convent school in her youth and had once been unhappily married to a man who had died. Croes concluded that Duff was intelligent and refined, but she was embarrassed about her apparent pregnancy.<sup>54</sup> Croes even provided military authorities with a written statement from the girl’s father approving the marriage and vowing to provide for her daughter and not to call “for assistance [from] any charitable society or organization of the U.S. Army during the absence of her husband, in the event of his death, or should his return to the United States be enforced.”<sup>55</sup>

At the behest of military authorities, the Red Cross even investigated some Australian girls after they had married American soldiers. Red Cross director Wayne Clark investigated Ilma Walker who married Gus Nichols. It will be recalled that Nichols married his pregnant girlfriend without permission and military authorities now wished to verify his story. Clark reported on the woman’s family history, examined the

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Peter G. Croes to Eugene O. Pierce, 06 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

<sup>55</sup> Herbert L. Duff, [No Title], 10 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

couple's marriage certificate, and noted that Walker was nearly ready to give birth. The director also made sure Walker understood that she could expect no financial assistance from the US government. Finally, Clark provided the woman with a statement for her parents to sign, by which they agreed to take care of her financially in the event of her husband's death or incapacity.<sup>56</sup>

Australians who knew about the American practice of investigating prospective brides and their families occasionally protested against this policy. The UAW considered Red Cross interviews and the need for parents to sign forms a shameful attack on personal privacy. Jessie Street pressured Prime Minister Curtin to demand an explanation from US military authorities. After some inquiries through diplomatic channels, embarrassed American officials admitted to Curtin that the forms had no force under the law.<sup>57</sup> They were just another effort to discourage wartime unions.

It was not just the investigation of brides that upset some Australians; certain marriages were altogether opposed. Australians did not look kindly on the fact that some GIs were marrying Australian women below the age of consent. The *Courier Mail* alleged that the marriage of minors was a big problem and urged clergymen not to marry young people unless they were over twenty-one or had their parents' permission.<sup>58</sup> Another criticism of wartime marriages emanated from the *Courier Mail* in January 1944. The report condemned the conduct of American husbands after marriages had taken place. In a letter to the editor, Dorothy Tangney, Australia's first woman senator,

---

<sup>56</sup> Wayne G. Clark to the Commanding Officer, Base Section 4, 25 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

<sup>57</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 333.

<sup>58</sup> *Courier Mail*, 22 May 1942.

shed light on the sad state of numerous women who had been deserted by their American husbands. Tangney later sponsored legislation that allowed women to enter into divorce proceedings in their home state of Australia rather than have to travel to the United States if they wished to divorce.<sup>59</sup>

Tangney's letter prompted a response from an anonymous American a few days later. Calling himself "Indignant Yank," the American railed against Tangney and others who criticized Australian-American marriages. The American believed that too many Australians criticized these marriages and needlessly warned of the "dire outcome to be expected of such unions."<sup>60</sup> He believed that such talk was "pure unadulterated rubbish" that "is of a more harmful nature than of good, as it only serves to create friction between Australians and Americans by constantly bringing to public attention those unfortunate cases in which the marriage has not been successful until public opinion naturally turns against all such unions."<sup>61</sup>

"Indignant Yank" admitted that there had "been a number of unhappy and disastrous marriages between Australians and Americans."<sup>62</sup> What he wanted was acknowledgement that marriages between Australians often ended in divorce and recrimination as well. Criticism of these marriages never found its way into print, according to the American, "yet one has but to pick up a paper to find someone criticising Australian-American marriages. Persons with any degree of common decency can only

---

<sup>59</sup> *Courier Mail*, 31 January 1944; Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 387.

<sup>60</sup> *Courier Mail*, 31 January 1944.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

look upon such interference with disgust.”<sup>63</sup> The American ended his letter stating that he himself was married to an Australian woman and no amount of criticism of Americans could “shatter our trust in each other or to break up our marriage.”<sup>64</sup>

“Indignant Yank” observed, correctly, that many marriages between Australians failed, yet his letter, which contains a personal edge, suggests that Tangney was not alone in criticizing the behaviour of newly married American husbands. Moreover, her allegation that Australian women were abandoned had substance. In November 1942 for instance, Maude Poole of Ormond Victoria wrote to her parliamentary representative about the plight of her pregnant daughter. The father to-be was an American private transferred to Townsville. Poole stated in her letter that the American had asked permission to marry but American authorities turned him down. After correspondence with the American Legation and General R.J. Marshall, the parliamentary representative discovered that the private, William Olsen, had never requested permission to marry. The general suggested that Poole contact Olsen and provide a medical certificate of her daughter’s condition. He concluded his letter stating that “[u]ntil such time when the soldier may make application for marriage, acknowledging responsibility for the condition of the girl, no action will be taken by this command.”<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Maude Angela Poole to The Right Hon. Arthur Calwell, 22 November 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1; Arthur A. Calwell to Nelson T. Johnson Esq., 30 November 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1; John R. Winter to Major General R.J. Marshall, 01 December 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1; R.J. Marshall to John R. Winter, 06 December 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

Other historians have remarked on a pattern of abandonment. Rosemary Campbell states that “[a]s the war progressed, it became increasingly apparent that quite a number of American husbands were not what they claimed to be. Some had given false names and addresses, some had married bigamously and others had disappeared leaving the wives no knowledge of their whereabouts”<sup>66</sup> It is impossible to determine how widespread this practice was or to measure how the abandonment of war brides affected relations between American servicemen and civilians. Still, it is safe to say that through gossip and experience many Australian learned of seduction, deceit, and desertion.

If American military authorities generally did not want to see GIs marrying Australian women, the prospect of marriages between black GIs and white Australian women provoked great anxiety that reflected ingrained prejudices and practices in American society. Miscegenation and interracial sexual relations were still strong taboos. Indeed mixed race marriages were illegal in thirty out of forty-eight states. Furthermore, if interracial marriage was illegal in the state of domicile of either party, the marriage was illegal everywhere in the United States.<sup>67</sup> We shall also see in chapter four that some Australians and most white American servicemen did not look kindly on amorous relations between the two groups. The odd fling could be tolerated, especially if the woman was a prostitute or of “low character,” but marriage was beyond the pale. Yet, they happened, if only because black GIs sometimes impregnated Australian women.

---

<sup>66</sup> Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 79.

<sup>67</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 231.

By the spring of 1943, the number of pregnancies had caught the eye of military authorities. The chief of staff of the United States Army Services of Supply (USASOS)<sup>68</sup> cited a case where a black soldier had impregnated a sixteen-year-old Australian girl and had been granted permission to marry. Seeing this as only the beginning, the chief of staff wrote to R.J. Marshall, the commanding general of the USASOS, remarking that “[t]he realization that there is a considerable amount of this type of case possible, causes us to feel that some action should be taken to discourage these possibilities.”<sup>69</sup> The chief of staff suggested a new directive to prohibit these unions; however, General Marshall refused to approve it.<sup>70</sup> The remarkable feature of this incident, as was often the case with seemingly minor interpersonal matters, was the attention it attracted at the highest level. In addition, to prosecuting a war, the military command structure functioned as an intrusive government, managing men and regulating relations. If war comprised long periods of tedium punctuated by bursts of lethal activity, then the US military was determined to minimize its financial liabilities and limit racial mingling during the tedium.

The truth of the preceding statement is confirmed by a secret message MacArthur sent to four commanding generals in Australia in 1944. MacArthur was concerned about mixed marriages and asked his subordinates if anyone in their commands had granted permission to black officers or soldiers to marry white girls. In addition, MacArthur

---

<sup>68</sup> The United States Army Services of Supply succeeded the United States Army Forces in Australia in July 1942 and was responsible for the supply, transportation, and administration of MacArthur's forces in the SWPA. See Bykofsky, *United States Army in World War II*, 426.

<sup>69</sup> C/S USASOS to CG USASOS, 08 May 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

wanted to know how many marriages had been granted, who the parties were, and if any black servicemen had married without permission. Finally, MacArthur asked if anyone knew of white wives returning to the USA.<sup>71</sup>

A few days later, replies from base commands within the USASOS revealed nearly a dozen marriages between black GIs and white Australian girls. All but one of the marriages had been approved on account of pregnancy or the existence of a child. In one case, a staff sergeant was demoted to private for getting married. There were probably as many as fifty similar marriages during the war.<sup>72</sup> This number is small, but its significance is that it was the subject of a reporting effort that went right to the top. This was indicative of profound ingrained nervousness about race relations in the armed services. Racial interaction complicated the management of men who were drawn from a nation that retained racist laws and customs.

As if the basic racial attitudes within the American forces were not tense and vexed enough, the fact that Australian women entered into the mix compounded matters. Immigration restrictions in Australia and the views on miscegenation in both countries meant that many marriages were doomed. Under Australia's Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, black GIs were not allowed to settle in Australia after the war. That of course meant that if couples wished to stay together they had to settle in America, where mixed marriages were viewed with ill favour and in most states illegal. Potts and Potts found one mixed marriage that managed to survive both the war and ingrained social

---

<sup>71</sup> MacArthur to CG, Sixth Army, CG Fifth Air Force, CG USASOS, CG, 14<sup>th</sup> Antiaircraft Command, 12 May 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1.

<sup>72</sup> H.L. Anderson to Commanding General, USASOS, 16 May 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 185, File: 291.1; M.J. Conway to CG USAFFE, 19 May 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1; Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 369.

antagonisms in the US; however, they believe that the example of an Australian woman who moved to her husband's farm in Alabama was indicative of such marriages. After a year of weathering abuse from blacks and whites alike, a local charity raised funds for the unhappy woman's return trip to Australia.<sup>73</sup>

### **Divorce and Cuckolds**

Relations between Australian women and American servicemen extended beyond matrimony, or rather often fell short of matrimony. American soldiers engaged in affairs with married Australian women and the occupation apparently increased divorce rates. The *Courier Mail* reported that in 1943, 398 divorces were granted in Queensland. This was an all time high and there were over one hundred more divorces recorded than in 1942.<sup>74</sup> Of course, the occupation was not the only factor that contributed to the increase in divorces. The stress and disruption caused by the war, long absences of husbands fighting abroad, and the extra-marital activities of Australian men played their part too, but it is probably no coincidence that the 398 divorces in 1943 corresponded with the highpoint of the American occupation. Indeed, in 1943, 173 divorces were granted on the grounds of adultery and of these, 71 Americans were named as co-respondents.<sup>75</sup> It should be added that divorce was a formal dissolution of marriage and a legal process that could be counted, but the number of *de facto* separations probably rose too.

---

<sup>73</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 370.

<sup>74</sup> *Courier Mail*, 30 December 1943.

<sup>75</sup> Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 77.



Records from Queensland's Justice Department provide more evidence to support the role some Americans played in the break up of Australian marriages. Once again, case files disclose what really could occur among sexually active adults amidst the directed movements of military personnel. With husbands away, a few women seized opportunities for profit and diversion. Aggregate data meanwhile can intimate little about the human drama that attended encounters. Constable R. Matheson investigated the marriage between Thelma and Hartley Carter because the former had petitioned for divorce. Police ascertained that relations between husband and wife had deteriorated after Mr Carter returned home unexpectedly on leave in May 1943. When the husband entered his home, he found one of his daughters talking to an American, while his wife was alone in her bedroom. Whatever he saw enraged him to the point that he accused his wife of running a brothel and he stopped her monthly allotment. The report also revealed that his wife had committed adultery in his absence and that she claimed she was carrying an American's child, although police believed this claim might have been spurious to gain a divorce.<sup>76</sup>

Leslie Henry Bannister wished to divorce his wife Nellie after a series of infidelities dating back to 1938. The husband had forgiven past sins and he even forgave his wife's adultery with an American GI, while he was stationed in the Middle East. Mr Bannister's well of forgiveness was seemingly bottomless; he took his wife back even after he discovered she was carrying the American's child, which she claimed was later miscarried. Nevertheless, after the hapless husband went away on duty again, Mrs

---

<sup>76</sup> Constable R. Mathews, "Petition for Divorce, Thelma Rose Carter vs. Hartley George Carter, 26 June 1943, QSA, Justice Department, JUS/67.

Bannister became pregnant and had another supposed miscarriage. When he returned home on leave, Mr Bannister caught his wife in a Brisbane hotel with a partially clad GI. This was the end for the husband and he had her allotment stopped. Incidentally, police investigated Mrs Bannister and discovered that she had not had a series of miscarriages as stated by her estranged husband, but instead had had her pregnancies aborted.<sup>77</sup>

In February 1943, Australian serviceman H.G. Carter decided to stop his wife's allotment after he discovered her in his bed with an American soldier. Carter asked her to end the affair, but she replied "I like him and I'm going to carry on with him. He's got plenty of money and the pay you give me is not enough to live on so the best thing you can do is get out."<sup>78</sup> Naively thinking pay was the answer to the problem, Carter offered his wife an extra ten shillings per week, which she rejected. "She got all she wanted from Americans."<sup>79</sup> Australian women were often attracted to the GIs higher pay, which was significantly more than what their Australian comrades received. By June 1942, the average pay for a US private was fifty-two dollars a month, twice the earnings of his Australian counterpart. It is important to note that this high rate of pay was not only "a mirror of American abundance" but also the deliberate policy of the Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall. He believed that high pay improved "morale problems of inactive but articulate troops who were far from home."<sup>80</sup>

In another episode, one Australian husband, William Winnett fearing the worst about his wife's frequent late nights on the town, took the desperate step of hiring a

---

<sup>77</sup> Constable [?] to Inspector of Police, 06 February 1946, QSA, Justice Department, JUS/67.

<sup>78</sup> H.G. Carter, "Cancellation of Allotment," 04 February 1943, QSA, Justice Department, JUS/67.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, xxviii.

private investigator. On 13 January 1942, Winnett and investigator Samuel Walker followed Mrs Winnett and her sister around Brisbane. After some time spying, the men observed Mrs Winnett and a GI enter a darkened doorway. A few minutes later, the men approached the couple and the detective shone his flashlight to find Mrs Winnett and the soldier mid-coitus. Shortly thereafter, Mr Winnett petitioned his wife for divorce on the grounds of adultery.<sup>81</sup>

The increase in the divorce rate does not tell the whole story, as was suggested when separation was mentioned. There were other examples of American servicemen making cuckolds out of Australian husbands and the incidents did not lead to divorce. In May 1943, American authorities were forced to deal with the womanizing of one Lieutenant Boyd Herman of the 71<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron. According to Brigadier General Thomas E. Rilea, Herman had been keeping company with the wife of an Australian army sergeant. When Sergeant T.F. Noss learned of the affair, he invited Herman to his home for dinner “discussed the situation with him, and an agreement was reached that while Lt. Herman would be welcome in the home at any time, he was not to see Mrs. Noss or communicate with her” without his knowledge.<sup>82</sup> The American broke his promise shortly thereafter, for Noss came home late one night to find Herman in his home with his wife. According to Rilea’s letter, Noss protested the American’s behaviour and forcibly threw him out of his house. At this point, the American produced a concealed handgun and threatened to shoot the Australian. Fortunately for the

---

<sup>81</sup> Samuel Walker, 13 January 1942, “Affidavit, William Esmond Winnett vs. Thelma Florence Winnett,” QSA, Crown Solicitor’s Office, CRS/299.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas E. Rilea to Commanding General, USASOS, 21 May 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 985, File: 250.3.

American lieutenant, Noss asked that US authorities not press charges. He hoped to effect a reconciliation with his wife and feared this would fail if charges were preferred.<sup>83</sup>

Military police ultimately apprehended Lieutenant Herman and General Rilea administered a severe reprimand. The general had “a quiet talk with the young officer” where he pointed out “the seriousness of the offence, and the discredit he brought upon himself, his uniform, the Air Force and the American Army.”<sup>84</sup> Herman vowed he would break off his relationship with Mrs Noss. This was all in the good because the cuckolded husband had said he would kill Herman if he tried to see his wife again. Sergeant Noss’s threat prompted General Rilea to transfer the lieutenant to Brisbane post haste and bar him from visiting Sydney where the Nosses lived.<sup>85</sup> It is striking that a general acted as a moral agent in what was a private, albeit complicated and dangerous, affair among adults. The fact that an American uniform figured in a love triangle in a foreign country put the matter on the general’s desk. Squalid affairs tarnished the preferred image of clean-cut saviours and could result in violent confrontations. The Americans were image conscious.

Sex between married women and American GIs strained relations and resulted in a fair share of divorces, but these associations also created problems at the highest levels of officialdom and brought the question of legal jurisdiction once again to the fore. In late 1943, a US soldier was petitioned to appear in court. He was the co-respondent in divorce proceedings between an Australian man and wife. However, US authorities

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

obstructed efforts to have the soldier testify, claiming that Americans were immune from such proceedings.<sup>86</sup> Prime Minister Curtin considered the case so serious that he intervened personally. Curtin contacted MacArthur and described the divorce proceeding as a “most distressing case” that he believed raised “issues of wide and general importance.”<sup>87</sup> The Prime Minister questioned whether it was “really necessary for the United States Forces in Australia to press the claim to immunity from civil proceeding in respect of claims brought against members of those forces in their personal capacity, and not arising out of acts in the course of duty.”<sup>88</sup> Curtin had learned through the Dominions Office that the US authorities in the United Kingdom permitted “civil judicial proceedings against members of their Forces to take their normal course” and wished for a similar arrangement in Australia.<sup>89</sup> MacArthur’s response to the Prime Minister took on a conciliatory tone, which highlighted the co-operative relationship the two men shared.<sup>90</sup> He was in total accord with Curtin stating “it is not the contention of the United States forces that members of such forces be immune from civil proceedings brought against them for actions done in a personal capacity and not performed in the execution of their military duties.”<sup>91</sup>

MacArthur agreed that Americans would not enjoy immunity from Australian civil courts, but his position never trickled down the chain of command. Quite possibly

---

<sup>86</sup> Curtin to MacArthur, 04 November 1943, MacArthur Archives, RG 4, Reel 588.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1964), 151. When recalling his relationship with Curtin, MacArthur wrote “[w]e promptly came to a sense of mutual trust, co-operation, and regard that was never once breached by word, thought, or deed.”

<sup>91</sup> MacArthur to Curtin, 16 November 1943, MacArthur Archives, RG 4, Reel 588.

MacArthur let the misunderstanding persist in order to minimize the number of unseemly appearances of young American men admitting in court to breaking up Australian homes. In several cases, private solicitors attempted to serve American personnel only to be stonewalled by American authorities. In February 1944, Australian serviceman John Leveson petitioned his wife for divorce on account of her adultery with American Lieutenant James Bufford. Solicitors representing the husband contacted American authorities in an effort to serve the lieutenant as a co-respondent, as this was required under the laws of New South Wales. Solicitors could not find Bufford in Sydney and they eventually learned that he had left the city in January. Unable to find him, they politely asked American authorities to “furnish us with the particulars of his present whereabouts.”<sup>92</sup>

After two months of waiting, the solicitors received a letter from Bufford that was hardly co-operative. In response to the request to serve him, Bufford stated “I have considered the request made by John Bruce Leveson, a member of the Australian Military Forces, that personal service of process be allowed on me in the pending divorce suit...in which I have been named Co-Respondent, and advise that I do not wish to accept or allow such service.”<sup>93</sup> Given the legalese of the letter, it appears Bufford had help in its wording. In addition, we will see that after some deliberation, Bufford’s superiors considered a refusal to be served as the best way forward.

---

<sup>92</sup> R.D. Meagher, Sproule & Co. to the Commanding Officer, Headquarters Base “A,” 04 February 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File 013.1.

<sup>93</sup> James L. Bufford to Staff Judge Advocate, 26 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File 013.1.

The Adjutant General Division of the American army supported Bufford's refusal to co-operate. Assistant Adjutant General G.J. Mandina wrote to R.D. Meagher, Sproule, and Company, the solicitors acting on Leveson's behalf, on 13 April 1944. With regard to the solicitors' request for Bufford's address, Mandina maintained that the "policy of the War Department of the United States of America is not to take affirmative action to effectuate service of process on military personnel in personal litigation unconnected with official duties. Accordingly, your request cannot be favourably considered."<sup>94</sup> Addressing the fact that the laws of New South Wales required that the co-respondent be served, Madina opined that the lack of co-operation "will not defeat or prejudice the right of your client to obtain a decree for dissolution of his marriage."<sup>95</sup> Between the lines, it is possible to glimpse a publicity-conscious senior command hoping that a divorce would go forward without an American giving lurid details in a courtroom. Also, one cannot discount the existence of *esprit de corps* and national loyalty within the American forces which made officialdom instinctively shield its own.

In another divorce case, lawyers acting for Herbert Glazier wrote to the headquarters of the USASOS in February 1944, hoping to determine the whereabouts of Private Mack Cook. Solicitors wished to serve him as a co-respondent in Glazier's divorce proceeding and allow him the opportunity to defend himself against charges that he entered into an adulterous affair with Glazier's wife. The solicitors hoped that authorities would let them know the next time Cook would be in Sydney so they could

---

<sup>94</sup> G.J. Mandina to R.D. Meagher, Sproule & Co., 13 April 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File 013.1.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

serve him.<sup>96</sup> What is significant about this case is that it encouraged Staff Judge Advocate Hayford Enwall to examine international law, the laws of New South Wales, and the laws of the United States in order to come up with a policy. On February 26, he produced a memorandum for his superiors. Unaware of MacArthur's agreement with Curtin (which again suggests the general did not disseminate it) from the previous year, Enwall believed the first question American authorities needed to determine was if Australian courts had any jurisdiction "to entertain a civil proceeding against a member of the United States armed forces."<sup>97</sup> In addressing this question, Enwall pointed out that the Australia's National Security Regulations (NSR) only applied to criminal proceedings against American personnel and that there existed no "similar renunciation of the jurisdiction of Australian civil courts."<sup>98</sup>

Precedent offered no help in determining jurisdiction either because the cases most relevant to Australian divorces concerned civil proceedings against American servicemen who were occupying hostile territory. Therefore, according to the staff judge advocate, "the rule of international law on this subject is as yet not fully developed."<sup>99</sup> Because of this ambiguity, Enwall believed that the US military "should not commit itself to a definite decision, if it can be avoided, on the existence or non-existence of the jurisdiction of the Australian courts."<sup>100</sup> With little help from existing international law or legal precedent, Enwall concluded that "the United States should not interpose

---

<sup>96</sup> Carruthers Hunter & Co. to The Commanding General, United States Army Services of Supply, 15 February 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File: 013.1.

<sup>97</sup> Hayford O. Enwall to Adjutant General, 26 February 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File: 013.1, 2.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 5.



objection or take positive steps to prevent an Australian plaintiff from effecting service on members of the United States forces in civil actions based on matters unrelated to their official duties.”<sup>101</sup>

However, this did not mean that US military authorities should help Australian plaintiffs either in the view of the staff judge advocate. In order to support this position, Enwall cited a caption of a War Department bulletin from October 1942 and highlighted the following passage: “[i]t is not the policy of the War Department to take affirmative action to effectuate service of process on military personnel.”<sup>102</sup> However, Enwall might have been balancing his opinion on a rather thin reed because the above sentence concerned situations where individuals wished to enter military reservations in order to serve military personnel. The bulletin stated that because the permission of base commanders or adjutants was needed for entry “timely application should be made in advance...for the necessary permission and for information as to the time and place where service may be made.”<sup>103</sup> This was a far cry from refusing to give the location of American servicemen to Australian solicitors.

The staff judge advocate even examined New South Wales’ divorce law in order to substantiate claims made by Australian solicitors that co-respondents had to be served to effect dissolution of marriage. Citing the Matrimonial Causes Act, Enwall noted that the law allowed the court to waive the necessity to serve co-respondents in special circumstances. Enwall added that the court also had the right to “dispense with service of

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

the co-respondent,” when it was impossible to contact him; he could then be removed from the suit.<sup>104</sup> Also important for American servicemen was the fact that co-respondents could not be compelled to answer to charges of adultery. The provision existed because the plaintiff could exact damages from the co-respondent if charges were proven. In practice, if American servicemen refused to be served, did not disclose their whereabouts, or avoided appearing in court, there was nothing that Australian courts could do. Co-respondents would be removed from the suit.<sup>105</sup>

In his summation, Enwall came back to the original case that prompted his research; he maintained that authorities should not make Private Cook available to solicitors given the policy of the War Department. The fact that “failure to serve the co-respondent will apparently not defeat the petitioner’s right to obtain a divorce,” only strengthened Enwall’s resolve not to co-operate with Australian solicitors.<sup>106</sup> Still, Enwall concluded that American authorities should make no objections to the jurisdiction of New South Wales courts given the haziness of international law nor should they put obstacles in the way of the petitioner’s efforts to serve the co-respondent. To do so, according to Enwall, would “give the impression” that American authorities “were unjustly attempting to shield or protect” soldiers from divorce proceedings.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, Enwall advised that American authorities provide the whereabouts of the co-respondent “if such can be done without danger to the military situation.”<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.,8

<sup>106</sup> Ibid .

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.,9.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

What did this policy mean in practice? Although following the letter of Australian and (vague) international law, American authorities did shield their men from civil litigation. Australian solicitors never learned the locations of Lieutenant Bufford or Private Cook. In fact, there are no examples of military authorities divulging the location of American servicemen to anyone. In July 1944, to cite one of numerous examples, Assistant Adjutant General Edward Hazelton refused to give the location of Sergeant Edward Fortier because of “security reasons.”<sup>109</sup> Similarly, Hazelton would not provide solicitors the location of Private Carl Stephenson on the same grounds and reiterated the well-worn tune that the “policy of the War Department of the United States is not to take affirmative action to effectuate service of process on military personnel in personal litigation unconnected with official duties.”<sup>110</sup> In the final analysis, though American authorities may have provided for the possibility that the location of a co-respondent might be divulged, they used “security reasons” as an excuse to prevent the whereabouts of American servicemen coming into the hands of Australians solicitors. This policy had great advantages. While it officially showed co-operation with Australians, it nevertheless protected Americans from embarrassing civil suits and it tempered any criticism from Australians. After all, there were no “official” obstructions in the path of solicitors and petitioners for divorce.

---

<sup>109</sup> Edward A. Hazelton to R.D. Meagher, Sproule and Co., 02 July 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File: 013.1.

<sup>110</sup> Edward A. Hazelton to D.M. Gillies, 28 August 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 154, File: 013.1.

## Sex, Morals, and VD

Not all relations between Australian women and US servicemen resulted in marriage or originated in companionship or romance. Some were simply acts of fleeting sexual gratification (at least for GIs). The war helped break down the old moral order, as parents and moral authorities could no longer control their sons and daughters. In describing Brisbane during the war, Campbell observes that to the

consternation of much of Brisbane society, a large number of women and girls threw away caution and behaved as recklessly as any soldier. Despite the urgings by religious leaders for women to keep high moral standards and refrain from sexual intercourse, the establishment of prophylactic depots about the city and the subsequent discarded French letters [condoms] were a constant reminder of ever-present sexual activity.<sup>111</sup>

Because of their better uniforms, money, and “obvious sexual appreciation of women,” GIs found themselves playing both the roles of pursuer and pursued.<sup>112</sup> If sex was a preoccupation and release for conscripted GIs, the same could be said for Australian women dealing with the stresses of war. Moreover, with fathers away fighting and mothers working, family discipline broke down.<sup>113</sup> That meant young adolescent girls also found themselves attracting the attention of GIs and having sex. As we shall see in chapter five, this resulted in authorities taking a pragmatic approach to cases of statutory rape.

Sex was everywhere during the war, especially in urban centres at night. The *Courier Mail* reported that GIs preferred to stay in rented hostels in Brisbane rather than

---

<sup>111</sup> Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 90.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>113</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 320.

private homes with Australian families.<sup>114</sup> It was harder to have a sexual dalliance under the watch of one's Australian host. Peter Thompson and Robert Macklin record in *The Battle of Brisbane* that many couples did not bother to use hostels or hotels for their sexual escapades but instead "used parks, shop doorways and empty air-raid shelters for intimacy."<sup>115</sup> Reports from the Queensland State Police support this seemingly exaggerated description; constables arrested couples having sex in broad daylight in Brisbane's Botanic Gardens. After being caught in the act with an American soldier, one young woman begged the arresting constable to give her another chance as she had a young son at home and her husband would kill her. In another case, a group of gawking children drew a constable's attention to an Australian women and a GI having sex in the gardens.<sup>116</sup>

Sexual encounters were often no more than business transactions, as prostitution, though technically illegal, was tolerated and given semi-official sanction during the war. Brisbane had over twenty brothels in the so-called "sin-centre" around Albert Street. Queensland Police kept this area under surveillance and made sure the bordellos did not become a public nuisance. The Kings Cross area of Sydney was that city's well known red light district. Some brothels there catered solely to black or white GIs to avoid fights. Even smaller communities like Mt. Isa and Townsville had several brothels catering to American troops. There is even one story (probably apocryphal) that Prime Minister

---

<sup>114</sup> *Courier Mail*, 01 January 1943.

<sup>115</sup> Peter Thompson and Robert Macklin, *The Battle of Brisbane: Australians and Yanks at War* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2000), 99.

<sup>116</sup> W.N. Henry to Inspector of Police, 29 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031; W.N. Henry to Inspector of Police, 23 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031; W.N. Henry to Inspector of Police, 17 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

John Curtin sent a trainload of Sydney prostitutes to Brisbane to meet the American demand.<sup>117</sup> Prostitutes likely had a good idea about regional demand and required no government train to get them to Brisbane.

The breakdown of sexual mores – or at least the more visible display of prostitution – did not go unnoticed. Australian authorities and members of the public charged that immorality brought with it venereal disease. The state as moral agent had a long history in Australia. Brisbane theatres were closed down for bawdiness, liquor laws were passed, and unlicensed distillers were shut down in the 1850s.<sup>118</sup> Brisbane long had a prudish surface that encountered and objected to its raffish nightlife. Also, as Philippa Levine argues in her book *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*, Australia, influenced by similar policies in Britain and throughout the Empire, had a legacy of combating venereal disease through state coercion. Queensland was at the forefront of this trend and particularly authoritarian. It enacted the Contagious Diseases Act in 1868, which targeted women in an effort to combat VD.<sup>119</sup> This made Queensland the first jurisdiction within the Empire where women were detained and forced to accept treatment in lock hospitals.<sup>120</sup> By the early 1900s, the war on venereal disease was often conflated with morality and eugenics. Not only was “moral purity” at stake but also the future of the white race itself. As a result, those who called for controls against venereal disease were often the same people preaching moral reform and railing

---

<sup>117</sup> “Brothels,” *Vedette Magazine: The Journal of Queensland Police Service*, October 1995, 9; Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 147; John Hammond Moore, *Over-sexed, Over-paid, and Over here: Americans in Australia, 1941-1945* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981), 216.

<sup>118</sup> Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 63.

<sup>119</sup> Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race & Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 21, 101; Evans, *A History of Queensland*, 87.

<sup>120</sup> Levine, *Prostitution, Race & Politics*, 71.

against prostitution.<sup>121</sup> Australian states continued their interventionist bent before the First World War. New South Wales held prisoners with venereal disease past the end of their prison terms and Queensland began mandatory monitoring and testing of prostitutes in 1913.<sup>122</sup> By the 1920s, all states, save for South Australia, had laws that provided for the compulsory notification and treatment of female carriers of VD all in the name of “social purity” and “moral and social hygiene.”<sup>123</sup>

During the occupation, efforts to battle VD took on a new importance; winning the battle meant helping win the war against the Japanese, at least in the minds of American and Australian authorities. Queensland was still the vanguard in fighting disease through state coercion, as it continued to force prostitutes to “submit to frequent medical examinations at the Department of Health,” and lock hospitals still confined prostitutes. However, because of the war “promiscuous amateurs, delinquent girls,” and any women who had infected members of the fighting forces were also incarcerated.<sup>124</sup> Although they were also responsible for the spreading of VD and likely the spike in VD rates in Queensland in 1943, American servicemen were never publicly blamed for the spread of venereal disease.<sup>125</sup>

Other sources confirm whom the Queensland government targeted during the war. The magazine of the Queensland State Police noted in its fiftieth anniversary edition that “[a]ttempts by civilian authorities to control sexually transmitted diseases focused on

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>123</sup> Rosalind Kidd, *The Way We Civilise* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1997), 98.

<sup>124</sup> Michael Sturma, “Public Health and Sexual Morality, Venereal Disease in World War II Australia” *Signs* 3:4 (Summer 1988): 731.

<sup>125</sup> Sturma, “Public Health and Sexual Morality,” 727; Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 98.

women. The Police Consorting Squad picked up suspected carriers and took them to clinics for examination.”<sup>126</sup> There was no due process. One policewoman recalled that all one needed to do to force an examination on a suspected carrier was “ring a doctor and ring a policewoman.”<sup>127</sup> Ominously, one policewoman recalled if women refused an examination or treatment, a policeman was brought in and force was applied.<sup>128</sup>

The *Courier Mail* reported in July 1942 that Queensland health authorities met with representatives of the Australian and American forces to combat “social disease.” At the conference, American and Australian authorities agreed to improve treatment clinics, start an education campaign for troops, and increase “reporting to the State Health Department of suspected women.”<sup>129</sup> Sir Raphael Cilento, the dictatorial and opinionated Director-General of Queensland’s Health and Medical Services, even boasted to reporters about Queensland’s hard line on forcing women to accept VD treatment.<sup>130</sup> Cilento, who was in charge of the state’s public health policy, was a vociferous and long-time campaigner against venereal disease, particularly among Aborigines.<sup>131</sup> Cilento admitted that the state’s VD programme had limited effectiveness, but he inexplicably believed that it had to be expanded to meet wartime exigencies. To that end, he announced that ten new laboratories were being created to tackle the VD problem.<sup>132</sup> It should be

---

<sup>126</sup> “Women Police: Women Policing Women,” *Vedette Magazine*, 12.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Courier Mail*, 31 July 1942.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Kidd, *The Way We Civilise*, 102, 111.

<sup>132</sup> *Courier Mail*, 31 July 1942.



emphasized that these laboratories were for “women only.” The *Courier Mail* reported a week later that expansion had the purpose of examining women more rapidly.<sup>133</sup>

Australian media also participated in the propaganda campaign to try to educate women and dissuade them from sexual contact. January 1943, the *Courier Mail* reported that Lady Phyllis Cilento, the wife of the Director General, addressed the National Council of Women of Queensland. Lady Cilento announced that young women “gathered in large numbers in centres of essential industries and munitions works” would be lectured to on the subject sex hygiene. In addition, boys and girls at schools would also receive sex education to combat social disease. According to Cilento, social diseases “had been formerly under control, but were now getting out of control” because of the war.<sup>134</sup>

Sydney’s *Daily Mirror* printed a self-laudatory article about its role in educating the public about the dangers of venereal disease in February 1943. What had prompted the article was a Ministry of Health advertisement that the newspaper complained did not go far enough in its bluntness when addressing Australia’s struggle against VD. The article had warned its readership that venereal disease had spread rapidly under wartime conditions. It was not servicemen who were responsible for the outbreak, however, but women. The paper argued that “women who are open to danger today come from more classes than before. There are girls who, while they regard prostitution with horror,

---

<sup>133</sup> *Courier Mail*, 06 August 1942.

<sup>134</sup> *Courier Mail*, 02 January 1943.

affect to believe in “sexual freedom.” It is this class which at the present time is running grave risks for the sake of momentary gratification.”<sup>135</sup>

Finally, the *Courier Mail* printed an article entitled “The Doctor Says...Danger Lies in Kissing.” This article, presumably written by a local doctor, described a patient examination where it was discovered that the girl had contracted a throat infection. According to the doctor, the infection was Vincent’s Angina, which was “common in camps in wartime.”<sup>136</sup> The (unnatural) dialogue between doctor and patient intimated that the girl had contracted the illness from an army boyfriend. The article concluded with the doctor asking rhetorically “Is kissing unwise? As well to ask is sunshine too bright or rain too wet.”<sup>137</sup> The message was all too clear: do not get involved with servicemen and do not engage in physical intimacy.

If Australian authorities were bent on targeting women in their attempts to combat VD, what effect did the US presence have on these efforts? Michael Sturma argues that the occupation intensified efforts by Australian authorities to fight VD and restrict women. In fact, he points out that the US military aided Australian authorities, as they often helped ferret out women with VD.<sup>138</sup> This is hardly surprising given that American society went through a period of moral reform starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, which was heavily influenced by “evangelical religious revivalism.”<sup>139</sup> What was unique about this movement was that the state was seen as a

---

<sup>135</sup> *Dailey Mirror* (Sydney), 19 February 1943.

<sup>136</sup> *Courier Mail*, 02 January 1944.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Sturma, “Loving the Alien,” 11.

<sup>139</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 203.

moral agent that could enforce morality through coercion and the threat of force. As

Murray Rothbard explains the

emphasis, almost from the beginning, was to use government to stamp out sin and to create a perfect society, in order to usher in the Kingdom of God on Earth. Over the decades, the emphasis slowly but surely shifted: more and more away from Christ and religion, which became ever-vaguer and woollier, and more and more toward a Social Gospel, with government correcting, organizing, and eventually planning the perfect society.<sup>140</sup>

The moral reform movement reached its highpoint in the United States during the Progressive Era, where alcohol prohibition, laws against licentiousness, and the outlawing of prostitution enjoyed great support. Although the progressive movement petered out in 1920s most laws from that period were still on the books in the 1940s.<sup>141</sup>

Coupled with a tradition of enforcing morality through the state, the real damage that VD could inflict on US personnel and resources also encouraged American authorities to support Australian efforts. As Reynolds notes “[v]eneral disease was an occupational hazard of inactive armies and historically one of the main reasons for a soldier to be out of action, far more prevalent than wounds.”<sup>142</sup> Given this convergence of wartime practicalities and a tradition of prohibiting immoral behaviour through state power (evinced by the fact that many American municipal governments had VD control divisions during the war and Alabama law provided for the incarceration and treatment of infected prostitutes), it is hardly surprising US forces in Australia were enthusiastic partners in combating VD.<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> Murray Rothbard, “Origins of the Welfare State in America,” *The Journal of Libertarian Studies* 12:2 (Fall 1996): 205.

<sup>141</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 203.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

American officials also instituted policies of their own to combat venereal disease. In Melbourne, military authorities announced the locations of several Australian prophylactic stations open to GIs. Later, the US army established its own stations in Melbourne and elsewhere. American authorities also wanted infected personnel to inform them if they received treatment from Australian hospitals.<sup>144</sup> In March 1943, based on the discovery that two infected soldiers had potentially exposed a number of their comrades to VD while under confinement, the Provost Marshal Corps decided to test all apprehended AWOL soldiers for infection.<sup>145</sup> This mandatory practice at least dealt with men who were under military jurisdiction and had violated orders. What occurred to some Australian women was a violation of civil liberties that had a long history in the country.

American MPs with the help of Australia's police services investigated brothels where they suspected their men had been infected. In September 1943, the US army's VD Control Officer in Brisbane told Director-General Cilento "that during the last three months 17 cases of venereal disease have occurred among negro soldiers, which are believed to have resulted from exposure to prostitutes in the brothel located at 341 Stanley Street, South Brisbane."<sup>146</sup> MPs visited the brothel and discovered that one prostitute had just been released from the lock hospital after receiving treatment and another was unknown to authorities. This was not the first time this brothel had transgressed because the VD Control Officer complained that "on numerous occasions

---

<sup>144</sup> B.M Fitch to Commanding Officers, Camp Royal Park Victoria, Camp Darley Victoria, 19 February 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 1799, Box 1266, File: Morals and Conduct.

<sup>145</sup> P.M. to P.M., Base Section 7, 24 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1266, File: Morals and Conduct.

<sup>146</sup> M.L. Falick to Sir Raphael Cilento, 28 September 1943, QSA, HHA/J1.

women not known to the police and not examined have operated for varying periods at this brothel.”<sup>147</sup> In Brisbane, Queensland authorities, with the help of the US army, managed prostitution by subjecting prostitutes and presumed prostitutes to surveillance, forced examinations, and treatment. By implication, the policing and medical effort focused on women and ignored the role of GIs in the spread of disease.

In July 1943, an American VD Control Officer in Townsville informed Director-General Cilento of an outbreak of urethritis, which he believed was the result of gonorrhoea. The American suggested forwarding on urethritis questionnaires to Queensland medical authorities which named the GIs’ sexual partners. The VD Control Officer believed that if presented with the possibility of carrying gonorrhoea many women named in the questionnaires would volunteer for testing. This of course would eliminate the need to forcibly test the women. Interestingly, the American concluded his letter by noting military and civilian campaigns to fight VD in Townsville. The US military had shown the VD film *Damaged Goods* to GIs in the area and local newspapers in Townsville were carrying stories on how to fight venereal disease in the city.<sup>148</sup>

Despite efforts to combat VD in the Townsville area, the size of Base Section Two frustrated American authorities who had a hard time finding suspected female carriers in outlying areas. Both the dispersal of suspected carriers and a technical complication challenged authorities. Gonococcal cultures collected in distant communities could not survive the trip back to Townsville for testing so officials could not confirm who was infected. American technological innovation provided a solution; a

---

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Thomas W. Nisbet to Sir Raphael Cilento, 13 July 1943, QSA, HHA/J1.

US army captain suggested employing a technician and a roving incubator to examine women suspected of carrying VD.<sup>149</sup>

In March 1944, US authorities in Adelaide created a VD control programme, as many GIs had contracted gonorrhoea while on leave there. Staff Sergeant Herman Blair was sent to the city to report on the progress of the programme at the behest of Provost Marshal Jeremiah P. Holland. Blair first met with American military and Australian authorities in the city, where he learned that a Miss Curtis of the South Australia Police opposed the Americans' plans. Curtis shrewdly believed that "the U.S. Army wanted a clean City where their troops could visit on leave to have affairs with the girls of Adelaide and return to their Bases free of V.D."<sup>150</sup> That was exactly what the Americans wanted; Sergeant Blair tried to placate Curtis by suggesting the programme was not about control per se but was rather about prevention. The distinction was specious. Despite Curtis's opposition, the other civilian representatives were on board, and the sergeant reported progress had been made. A Captain Turnbow, who was in charge of the control programme in Adelaide, had opened a prophylactic dispensary. In addition, the captain assured the sergeant that the medical examination of female suspects would be conducted with all haste. Representatives of the state police, other than Miss Curtis, promised to give all possible assistance.<sup>151</sup>

How did the Australian public react to the sexual conduct and supposed immorality of American GIs and Australian women? Americans were rarely blamed in

---

<sup>149</sup> Medical Superintendent to Director General of Health, 19 April 1944, QSA, HHA/J1.

<sup>150</sup> Herman H. Blair to Provost Marshal, Base Section 7, 03 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1287, File: Investigations Criminal.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

the press for immoral conduct when it came to sex. Press coverage of immorality usually spoke in terms of general behaviour and avoided reference to actual perpetrators. Still, despite wartime censorship, which usually avoided mention of any American behaviour that might harm relations, a few explicit references to immoral American conduct found their way into print.<sup>152</sup> In August 1942, the *Courier Mail* published a letter from one GI who addressed complaints about American immorality. The soldier dismissed the idea that US forces were solely responsible for immorality in Brisbane. He believed it was only natural for soldiers to seek “the solace of women and wine or beer” when far from home and friends. Part of the blame he wrote should fall on Brisbane residents for not alleviating the boredom of American servicemen:

[i]f the citizens are really in earnest in maintaining moral standards let them create things that will save the soldier from boredom. Have more dances, gently but firmly managed; have reading-rooms that remain open after dark for those who wish to read; and establishments where men can play ping-pong, chess, draughts, and similar games, as well as respectable places where they can take respectable girls...Don't let fine chaps go to the devil because no other place is left for them to go. Will Brisbane accept the challenge?<sup>153</sup>

That GIs would fornicate rather than play ping-pong might not have occurred to the writer.

Few criticisms of American immorality cropped up in the censored press, but the Queensland Police remarked in their internal reports on the dissolute behaviour of US troops. In October 1942, for example, police described the conduct of GIs and Australian women leaving Cantwall's Ballroom in Brisbane, where a drunk Australian girl lay in the

---

<sup>152</sup> E. Daniel and Annette Potts, “American Newsmen and Australian Wartime Propaganda and Censorship, 1940-1942,” *Historical Studies* 21 (October 1985) : 570.

<sup>153</sup> *Courier Mail*, 19 August 1942.

ballroom's entrance surrounded by a group of gawking (and possibly predatory) sailors. The reporting constable concluded that "the conduct of the persons who attended the function was most disgraceful, and about the worst I have witnessed during my service."<sup>154</sup> Queensland Police Commissioner Cecil Carroll relayed the incident to the Minister of Health and Home Affairs.<sup>155</sup> The episode eventually reached the desk of Queensland Premier Frank Cooper who forwarded it to Prime Minister Curtin. Ultimately, after some personal diplomacy, American authorities vowed to control the conduct of their troops at the ballroom.<sup>156</sup> Why this episode found its way onto Curtin's desk helps shed light on the conduct of US forces in the city. This was not the first time police had complained about American behaviour at Cantwell's Ballroom. In fact, there had been a string of bawdy parties at the locale, and on one occasion US shore patrolmen had refused Queensland Police entry. That was not something the state police were likely to forget or forgive. The report that reached Curtin referred to a party that the Americans had promised would be "dry." The fact that they broke their promise escalated the incident to the point that it received the Prime Minister's attention.<sup>157</sup>

The Queensland Police also responded to other complaints of immoral behaviour on the part of American servicemen, especially if these incidents gained publicity. In April 1943, the *Courier Mail* reported that many residents in the town of Coolangatta had

---

<sup>154</sup> P.C. Constable 3279 to State Licensing Inspector, 16 October 1942, QSA, Health and Home Affairs Department, A/4316.

<sup>155</sup> C. Carroll to Minister for Health and Home Affairs, 17 October 1942, QSA Health and Home Affairs Department, A/4316.

<sup>156</sup> Premier to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, 11 November 1942, Health and Home Affairs Department, A/4316; Prime Minister to the Premier of Queensland, 21 December 1942, Health and Home Affairs Department, A/4316.

<sup>157</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 132.



complained of degrading behaviour on the part of GIs. Apparently, many were getting drunk at the town's beach and frolicking with women of loose character (spending time with Americans might have designated women as loose automatically). In response, police contacted US military police and co-ordinated efforts to curb drunkenness and rowdiness.<sup>158</sup> A second report noted that the situation in Coolangatta had improved due to vigilant policing. Yet it was noted that American sailors had recently brought a troop of prostitutes with them from Brisbane and at night it was difficult "to control the Soldiers who are accompanied by girls of loose character, consuming liquor on the beaches."<sup>159</sup>

In February 1944, a story from Brisbane's *Sunday Mail* recounted a tale of licentiousness and immorality around the inner-city neighbourhood of New Farm Park in a story entitled "Rowdyism, Vice Mar City Nights." The reporter claimed he witnessed all manner immoral behaviour, from drunken servicemen smashing bottles to couples having sex under trees. He even reported that a civilian male and a US sailor accosted him for sex during his walk to a local tram stop. Failing to find a tram, the reporter described how he came across a young woman and an American lieutenant. According to the story, the women told the American "I've been to a party, and I've been drinking, too! I want to get home to Yeerongpilly. What are you going to do about it?"<sup>160</sup> After running this "gauntlet of immorality," the reporter eventually made it back to his hotel to take stock of what he had seen. He concluded his article demanding that authorities clean

---

<sup>158</sup> Constable 3169 to Inspector of Police, 29 April 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12036.

<sup>159</sup> Sergeant 2634 to Inspector of Police, 07 June 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12036.

<sup>160</sup> *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 13 February 1944.

up the city by ruthlessly enforcing civil and military law, cutting all-night leave for military personnel, barring soldiers from keeping domestic accommodations, and prohibiting the use of military vehicles for personal use.<sup>161</sup> One cannot discount the possibility that these recommendations were a part of an editorial line of what was, after all, Brisbane's chief conservative publication.

Queensland Police took note of this story and decided to investigate nightlife in New Farm Park. Several constables reported that they did not see the rowdiness described in the article in the days after its publication or before. They witnessed the odd drunken soldier, but did not come across naked women or gangs of Allied servicemen.<sup>162</sup> Police even interviewed local residents who had no complaints about the Americans who frequented a nearby dancehall. Furthermore, residents maintained they had never seen naked women in the park near their residence. Still, police did get some damning testimony from resident William Clark, the foreman of New Farm Park, who claimed he encountered a young boy and a sailor in the women's lavatory one morning and often found condoms and women's panties on the park grounds.<sup>163</sup>

Queensland Police concluded that the news story was "very far fetched and that [the author was] imagining a lot of things," because in one night "all these things happen to him, when people residing here permanently have never made any complaint in connection with the dance hall or the park in general."<sup>164</sup> The inspector of police

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Sergeant 2081 to Inspector of Police, 15 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12037; Sergeant 2493 to Inspector of Police, 15 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12037; Sergeant 2669 to Inspector of Police, 15 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>163</sup> Sergeant 1614 to Inspector of Police, 20 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

responsible for the area echoed these sentiments, as he told Commissioner Carroll that “[i]f there were any fact on which the article was written they have certainly been extravagantly exaggerated.”<sup>165</sup>

Australian authorities, along with the media, targeted women in an effort to combat VD and improve morality, but American authorities could not blame them solely. True, the Americans collaborated with Queensland authorities in pursuing infected women, but when it came to morality, authorities blamed their own men for bad conduct. In January 1943, Adjutant General Ostrander wrote to all base section commanders about the unseemly conduct of US soldiers. The letter opened with the following admonishment: “[i]t has come to the attention of the Commanding General that personal social activities of many of the U.S. Army Officers and enlisted men do not conform to the accepted high standard of the average American.”<sup>166</sup> What concerned Ostrander, and other high-ranking officers, was ostensibly the kissing of women in public places, which created “an unfavourable impression on the general public and resentment against all American troops by many Australian men.”<sup>167</sup> This was no doubt true, however, sexual escapades, which also occurred in public places, were another reason for the disquiet of American officialdom. Ostrander ordered officers, NCOs, and MPs to correct “improper social conduct,” when they saw it because “[o]ur mission in the S.W.P.A. is to

---

<sup>165</sup> Inspector to Commissioner of Police, 15 April 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12037.

<sup>166</sup> L.S. Ostrander to Commanding Officers, All Base Sections, 06 January 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1266, File: Morals and Conduct.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

accomplish a war task and not to excite resentment among our allies by the social conduct of our Army personnel.”<sup>168</sup>

### **GIs and Aboriginal Women**

Relations that existed between Australia’s Aboriginal population and American servicemen are hardly mentioned in official documents or by historians. Potts and Potts make a few references to Aboriginals in *Yanks Down Under*, noting among other things, that Aboriginals were sometimes encouraged to attend black dances at the Dr. Carver Club in Brisbane; that Aboriginals aided black GIs in the odd bar brawl; and that some even helped construct airstrips in the Northern Territory and Queensland.<sup>169</sup> In addition, the authors note the travails of several Aboriginal women who had children by black GIs.<sup>170</sup> There is a good reason for the paucity of information. American servicemen and Aboriginals did not come into much contact. There were only around 87,000 Aboriginals in the whole of the country; most lived in remote locations, were confined to reserves, and state governments restricted their movements and activities.<sup>171</sup>

Nevertheless, close inspection of archives in Brisbane and Washington DC reveals more evidence of interaction between GIs and Aboriginals in Queensland. A report from the Director of Native Affairs described an incident where an American airman fired on three Aboriginal fishermen on the Stewart River for sport. In addition,

---

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 111, 189, 190.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, 368.

<sup>171</sup> Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788-1993* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 152, 133, 138.

police reported an episode whereby a mixed race Aboriginal tracker attacked a black GI when he saw him with two mixed race Aboriginal women in Rockhampton.<sup>172</sup>

Despite these sporadic examples of violence between Australian Aboriginals and American servicemen, most documented relations concerned GIs and Aboriginal women. Contact caused problems for those Queensland authorities whose job it was to control the Aboriginal population. Under the auspices of Queensland's Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897), Aboriginals were wards of the state and the leading police officer in each Queensland district became a "protector of Aboriginals."<sup>173</sup> Aboriginal reserves were closed to the public and their movements were at the discretion of the protectors. According to Rosalind Kidd the act was not designed so much to enforce segregation between whites and Aboriginals but to monitor white-Aboriginal relations and prohibit interracial sex.<sup>174</sup> Fears over polluting the white race through miscegenation were at the heart of Aboriginal controls. A 1936 amendment to the act disenfranchised "mixed-blood" Aboriginals, who previously did not come under the control of the state. These individuals could only become exempted from the law after undergoing state medical examinations.<sup>175</sup> After protests from those who suddenly found themselves under state control, the Queensland government passed the Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act (1939), which reversed many of the restrictions on mixed

---

<sup>172</sup> Deputy Director of Native Affairs to the Acting Under Secretary, Department of Health and Home Affairs, 18 June 1942, Queensland State Archives (QSA), SRS 505/1, Box 36, File: 1A/125; Constable 3316 to Inspector of Police, Rockhampton, 01 May 1944, Queensland Police Museum, File: Battle of Brisbane; Constable 3299 to Inspector of Police, Rockhampton, 03 May 1944, Queensland Police Museum, File: Battle of Brisbane.

<sup>173</sup> Kidd, *The Way We Civilise*, 48.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 138-139.

race Aboriginals and redefined which Aboriginals came under the control of the state. Under the new law, only Aboriginals with a “preponderance of Aboriginal blood” came under state control. However, minors of mixed parentage remained under the supervision of the Director of Native Affairs, and legally he was their guardian even if their parents were alive.<sup>176</sup>

It was in this context that Queensland Police investigated the pregnancy of a fourteen-year-old Aboriginal girl who lived on a reserve near the small community of Mareeba, in April 1943. Upon interrogation, the girl admitted that a white American GI named Jackson was responsible for her condition. The girl recounted that she and Jackson, whose 94<sup>th</sup> Coastal Artillery unit was stationed near the reserve, had been intimate on several occasions. Police also interviewed the girl’s father who maintained that he had seen his daughter talking to the American on a couple of occasions and told him to stay away. The investigation also alleged that the girl’s cousin had acted as her pimp and allowed Jackson and another soldier to have sex with her and his own wife in exchange for money. Constable E.J. Breene, the investigator, concluded that Jackson was likely responsible for the girl’s condition. Yet, because they received no co-operation from the girl, who was still besotted with Jackson, Queensland Police did not believe that they could prosecute the GI for exploiting a mentally impaired person. It is impossible to glean from the report if the girl was impaired or police considered her Aboriginal status *ipso facto* proof of impairment. Still, Constable Breene believed police could charge Jackson for having sex with an Aboriginal. He did not interview the

---

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 145-46.

accused because at present he did not “consider it advisable to do so, as from previous experience at this Station in dealing with American personnel it is likely that he will be moved from his present unit, and when inquiries are made concerning him the only information obtainable will be that he has left Marreba.”<sup>177</sup> The practice of moving personnel away from trouble was widely used by the Americans, as we shall see in chapter five.

In spite of his fear that the Americans would spirit away the accused, Breene eventually interviewed Robert Sherman Jackson two weeks later. The American, unsurprisingly, denied having had intercourse with the girl; however, the constable was more convinced than ever of his culpability. Still, he doubted that any charges could be preferred against Jackson because he discounted the reliability of Aboriginals as witnesses.<sup>178</sup> Jackson was not charged; however, the Queensland Police did not stay idle. Commissioner Carroll ordered police in Cairns to meet with US authorities “with a view to putting a stop to the association of U.S. troops with female aboriginals.”<sup>179</sup> Preventing race mixing, a goal that went back to the original “protectionist” legislation, also applied to Americans.

In June, a police sergeant contacted several officers of the 94<sup>th</sup> Coastal Artillery and informed them of the provisions under the Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act, which made it a crime for any person, other than an Aboriginal, to set foot on an Aboriginal settlement or have sex with an Aboriginal.<sup>180</sup> In addition, Constable Breene

---

<sup>177</sup> Constable E.J. Breene to Inspector of Police, 21 April 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>178</sup> Constable E.J. Breene to Inspector of Police, 03 May 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>179</sup> Commissioner of Police to Inspector of Police, 28 May 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>180</sup> Sergeant 2487 to Inspector of Police, [no date], QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

duly met with a Lieutenant Colonel Heiden of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Station Hospital contingent, concerning sexual relations between Aboriginal women and American GIs. Although the colonel did not believe his men were involved, he vowed to investigate the situation in Mareeba and put an end to relations if they were discovered. In his report, Breene believed that there would likely be no sexual activity because the 94<sup>th</sup> Coastal Artillery had left the area and only a few Americans under Colonel Heiden remained.<sup>181</sup> Finally, Detective Sergeant I. Tomlinson met with the American provost marshal on August 10. When informed about the case of serviceman Jackson and relations between GIs and Aboriginal women generally, the provost marshal vowed that he would labour to stop such relations as best he could.<sup>182</sup>

Limiting contact between Aboriginal women and American GIs was a chief goal of Queensland authorities. A seemingly harmless story in the *Courier Mail* from May 1943 highlights this uniquely Queensland concern. What caught the attention of officialdom was a story that six Aboriginal women made up part of the staff of the newly opened Dr. Carver Service Club in South Brisbane. After the story was brought to his attention, the Director of Native Affairs contacted the Under Secretary of the Department of Health and Home Affairs. Upset that no one consulted him about the employment of Aboriginals at the club, the director asked the under secretary to get in touch with Commissioner Carroll. In crude language, he demanded that the Queensland Police “obtain the particulars of names, breeds, living conditions, circumstances, etc. of such

---

<sup>181</sup> Constable E.J. Breene to Inspector of Police, 04 August 1943, QSA, Police Riles, A/12031.

<sup>182</sup> I. Tomlinson to C. I. Branch, 11 August 1943, QSA, Police Riles, A/12031.



girls to enable their future to be determined.”<sup>183</sup> The sequel had bizarre twists that expressed the complexities of the state’s racial legislation and the willingness of people to cooperate with police beyond legal requirements.

Police duly investigated the six women and discovered that none of them came under the director’s control because they were not sufficiently Aboriginal. Police learned from Harold Hawkins, the director of the Carver Club, that some of the girls were half Aboriginal and others only had one Aboriginal grandparent. Two of the girls had no Aboriginal blood whatever. One was a Pacific Islander and the other was a daughter of a white Tasmanian mother and an African missionary father. Still, the report revealed that Hawkins, at the behest of police, provided the Director of Native Affairs with the names of the girls and their living conditions. Hawkins also expressed interest in employing Aboriginal girls under the director’s control.<sup>184</sup>

Despite efforts to limit contact between Aboriginal women and American GIs, sexual relations continued to occur. By 1943, many Aboriginal women were new mothers or expectant, which prompted some GIs to offer marriage proposals. This created new problems for American and Australian authorities and hardship for Aboriginal women. Under the American Nationality Act, naturalization extended “only to white persons, persons of African nativity or descent, descendants of races indigenous to the Western Hemisphere, and Chinese persons or persons of Chinese descent.”<sup>185</sup> Filipinos who had served in the American armed forces could also become American

---

<sup>183</sup> *Courier Mail*, 06 May 1943; Director of Native Affairs to the Under Secretary, 06 May 1943, QSA, SRS 505/1, Box 47, File: 1A/178.

<sup>184</sup> A.V. Cumming to Inspector of Police, 26 May 1943, QSA, SRS 505/1, Box 47, File: 1A/178.

<sup>185</sup> Hayford O. Enwall to Director of Native Affairs, 04 June 1944, QSA, SRS 505/1, Box 49, File 1A/199.

citizens.<sup>186</sup> Aboriginal women who had children or married American GIs could not immigrate to the United States.

How did American immigration law apply to Australian women of both white and Aboriginal parentage? This question, like several others that concerned the private lives of civilians, rose through the chain of command. Shocking to modern sensibilities, the resulting policy applied racial definitions derived from fractions of “blood.” A memorandum from General MacArthur’s headquarters clarified this issue in July 1943. The marriage of an American soldier to a woman of Malaysian and Aboriginal descent had prompted the missive, which stated that a “person in order to be eligible to citizenship must have a preponderance of either white or African blood or both. A person having as much as one-half of other than white or African blood or both is considered to be a person ineligible to citizenship.”<sup>187</sup> Concerning the marriage that caught the attention of officials, Adjutant General Ostrander noted that “there will be considerable hardship in this case and any similar cases which may arise. The wife will not be permitted to go to the United States, nor will her children.”<sup>188</sup> Ostrander ended the letter urging commanding officers to “point out to personnel concerned, the position in which they will find themselves when they seek to take their wives and children...to the United States.”<sup>189</sup> By early 1944, Queensland policy reflected American opposition to such marriages and there can be no doubt that state authorities shared the underlying racial

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> L.S. Ostrander to Commanding General, Sixth Army, Commanding General, Fifth Air Force, Commanding General, United States Army Services of Supply, 06 July 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box, 184, File: 291.1.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

assumptions and interventionist attitudes. A circular from the Department of Native Affairs noted US policy and added, “it is inadvisable for such unions to be allowed. If any case of intended marriage comes under notice, it should be reported to the Director immediately with the full details of the female party’s breed. Unless there are particularly extenuating circumstances, the parties can be given to understand permission will be refused.”<sup>190</sup>

Despite efforts to avoid amorous relations between Aboriginal women and GIs, marriage requests continued to come. In June 1944, the headquarters of the USASOS contacted Queensland’s Director of Native Affairs concerning the proposed marriages between three black GIs and three women of Aboriginal “blood.”<sup>191</sup> The details of these relationships are negligible, yet we know that American authorities wished to learn if the women fell under the auspices of the Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act. The Americans wanted to know if the women needed permission to marry from the Director of Native Affairs.<sup>192</sup>

Queensland Police ultimately investigated the three women to establish their precise racial makeup. They discovered that one woman was mostly white as her mother was half white and her father was only one quarter Aboriginal. She did not come under the control of the director and could marry whomever she chose.<sup>193</sup> A similar police investigation revealed that another girl was a full-blooded Aboriginal and was being

---

<sup>190</sup> “Re: Marriage of Aboriginals to American Soldiers,” 20 January 1944, QSA, SRS 505/1, Box 47, File: 1A/178.

<sup>191</sup> A. Robert Ginsburgh to Director of Native Affairs, 09 June 1944, QSA, SRS 505/1, Box 49, File: 1A/199.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Constable 3716 to the Protector of Aboriginals, 24 June 1944, QSA, SRS 505/1, Box 49, File: 1A/199.

supported by the father of her illegitimate child, an American GI. Both parties wished to get married according to the report and the girl was “a person of good character, apart from her lapse” with her American lover. Interestingly, the director asked that another investigation be conducted regarding the girl’s background because she was unknown to his department. After the second investigation, police discovered that the information furnished from the original investigation was wrong. The girl was in fact only one quarter Aboriginal and the marriage was allowed to take place.<sup>194</sup> In wartime, Queensland and American authorities, whose societies shared the same taboos regarding miscegenation, agreed on the importance of racial purity and put great effort into defining and policing it.

## **Conclusion**

The American occupation produced thousands of marriages and countless affairs of one kind or another. Military authorities made no effort to discourage sex with prostitutes and flings with Australian women were accepted as a part of the occupation. These relations were tolerated because having a sexual outlet was good for GI morale. Australian and American officialdom gave brothels semi-official status because the sexual urges of GIs needed to be satisfied. In contrast, US military officialdom did not want GIs to marry Australian women and did everything in their power to prevent such unions. In the mixed up world of wartime sexual relations, VD was tackled as a threat to the war effort, but the type of sexual relations sanctioned by the military was of a high

---

<sup>194</sup> Detective Constable 3227 to Officer in Charge, 11 July 1944, QSA, SRS 505/1, Box 49, File: 1A/199; Director of Native Affairs to Colonel G.S.G, 12 September 1944, QSA, SRS 505/1, Box 49, File: 1A/199.

risk character. Meanwhile, ordinary conjugal relations that might have promoted safer sex were discouraged.

Marriage was a danger to military discipline, distracted soldiers from the war effort, and put under stress the civilian-soldier duality within each GI. It also increased the financial burden on the American government. Despite these efforts to discourage matrimony, GIs still got married. Many did so with the consent of their superiors, others just ignored barriers to marriage altogether or impregnated their girlfriends so authorities would grant permission. Most Australians were not against these marriages, but the abandonment of Australian wives during the war sparked criticism in some circles. Although Australian men did the same thing, GIs were the foreign “other” which made them an easy and identifiable target for criticism.

American servicemen were often involved in extra-marital affairs that helped break up Australian marriages. Playing the role of “the other man” did not endear cuckolded husbands to American personnel. Yet, these affairs also created friction when solicitors requested US officials to divulge the locations of GIs named in divorce suits. Imbued with *esprit de corps* and a desire to protect their own countrymen, American authorities refused to help Australians locate servicemen.

The Americans also contributed to the spread of venereal disease during the war. Yet, the Queensland government (which had a long authoritarian streak when it came to public morals) and Australian press blamed Australian women for the wartime drift towards conduct deemed immoral. In the war on VD, the Queensland government kept women under surveillance, confined them in lock hospitals, and forcibly treated them for

disease. In many cases, the US military co-operated with local authorities to find infected women and treat them for VD. This was not surprising as both countries shared a history of using state power in the name of “moral purity.” Moreover, the US military had practical manpower concerns that motivated them to limit the spread of venereal disease as much as possible. American officials recognized privately that their men were also responsible for the spread of VD and immoral conduct generally. They made efforts to limit the spread of venereal disease; however concerns over morale and the belief that male urges had to be satisfied meant that US authorities could at best limit venereal disease. They could never eliminate it.

Aboriginal women also became involved with American servicemen. Queensland had a long history of policing relations between whites and Aboriginals with the goal of stopping miscegenation. During the occupation, Queensland authorities continued this tradition. When word came that GIs were associating with Aboriginal women, American authorities were told to stop these relations, as they were illegal. This mentality found a parallel with American policy when it came to marriages between black GIs and Australian women. Rumours of interracial marriages exercised MacArthur to the point that he secretly asked his commanders in Australia to report on the scope of the “problem.” The only marriages that were approved were those where an infant or pregnancy was involved. Ultimately, both the US and Queensland authorities were determined to police sexual relations in order to contain moral, health, and race transgressions. There were cultural boundaries around what Australian and US officials accepted as proper conduct. They were determined to enforce those boundaries. In areas

where there was an historical and moral convergence, such as controlling VD and views on miscegenation, there was a great deal of mutual aid. Unfortunately for the US military, they would find that this level of co-operation close to nonexistent in their dealings with Australian workers.

### CHAPTER THREE – A NEW BOSS IN TOWN: UNCLE SAM AS EMPLOYER

Japanese attacks and conquests in 1941 and early 1942 meant a great reorganization of the Australian economy. Australia, fearing a Japanese invasion, could expect little aid from Britain; her resources were already stretched thin with commitments in Europe and North Africa. Economic assistance from the United States, primarily through lend-lease was forthcoming, but initially slow. This meant that Australia had to “depend primarily on her own manpower and productive resources.”<sup>1</sup> The fear of a Japanese invasion (and the necessary increase in the Australian fighting forces from 382,100 servicemen in December 1941 to 554,700 troops three months later) compelled Curtin government to institute substantive changes in the country’s economic structure that the war in Europe had not brought about. As S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin state in their book *War Economy 1942-1945*, for the first time since 1939 the government “was confronted by a population clamouring to be told what to do and what to sacrifice.”<sup>2</sup>

What did these changes mean in practice? The government applied austerity controls over materials such as timber, tinplate, fuel drums, bitumen, leather, and hand tools; aircraft production, a high priority in early 1942, was placed under the control of the newly created Director-General of Aircraft Production; wage and price controls were introduced, taxes increased, and profits were capped at four percent per annum; rationing was the order of the day, and the production of goods not essential to the war effort were

---

<sup>1</sup> S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, *War Economy 1942-1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1977), 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



prohibited. Most significantly, all Australian workers were organized under the auspices of the Manpower Directorate.<sup>3</sup>

The Manpower Directorate, created in January 1942, was in essence “a central executive authority responsible for co-ordinating” industry and military demands for labour. It allocated manpower and directed it to three main areas that were essential to Australia’s defence: the armed services, munitions and allied industries, and construction “works” (air stations, army camps, etc.).<sup>4</sup> All Australians, men and women above the age of sixteen, had to register with the directorate. Many exceptions were granted, but the directorate had the power to dragoon Australians into jobs essential to the war effort and “acted as the sole channel for engagement of labour by *all* employers.”<sup>5</sup> However, despite these powers, the hundreds of thousands of men serving in the Australian forces, the need to replace casualties, and the increased production in war industries (primarily munitions and aircraft production) meant that a shortage of labour was a constant problem during the war. By the beginning of 1943, the Australian economy had reached full employment.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the occupation, US forces relied heavily on Australian supplies and civilian labour. In the first months of 1942, the Commonwealth government created the Administrative Planning Committee (APC) and Allied Supply Council to satisfy all

---

<sup>3</sup> Butlin, *War Economy 1942-1945*, 6-9, 26; Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 189.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Butlin, *War Economy 1942-1945*, 47, 91; Stephen Alomes, *A Nation at Last? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988* (North Ryde, New South Wales: Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1988), 120.

American supply needs.<sup>7</sup> Both agencies included American representatives and the APC was directly responsible to Prime Minister Curtin. At the same time, it was apparent to US authorities that their forces did not possess the necessary manpower or equipment to construct the facilities (camps, airfields, port facilities, etc.) that their growing presence required. This meant that American (and Australian) forces had to rely on civil resources “for construction work outside operational areas.”<sup>8</sup> Most construction authorities with experience in building these facilities were governmental or quasi-governmental in nature. However, because they were under control of the individual states, the Commonwealth government created “machinery to organise the use of these already existing construction authorities.”<sup>9</sup> This machinery became known as the Allied Works Council, which was created in 1942.<sup>10</sup> This body essentially organized and carried out construction of military installations for American and Australian forces in the country. Labourers for council projects were supplied via the Manpower Directorate.<sup>11</sup>

The American forces did not just rely on civilian labour indirectly through the Allied Works Council but also hired many workers directly through the Manpower Directorate themselves. Thousands secured employment with the US forces during the war. According to E. Daniel and Annette Potts, the American forces employed 7,000 civilians by March 1943 and over 25,000 Australians by October 1944.<sup>12</sup> Over 2,500 Australians applied to work for the Americans in the Sydney area alone in February and

---

<sup>7</sup> Butlin, *War Economy 1942-1945*, 98.

<sup>8</sup> Butlin, *War Economy 1942-1945*, 142.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under: The American Impact on Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), 218.

March 1943 and more than 3,000 Australians applied in Queensland during the same period.<sup>13</sup> The American military hired personnel for assorted positions: messengers, typists, operators, clerks, draftsmen, accountants, bookkeepers, and labourers.<sup>14</sup>

Generally, Australians enjoyed good working conditions while in the Americans' employ. Civilians received competitive wages, fifteen days of sick leave, free medical treatment, and worker compensation when injured on the job.<sup>15</sup> By 1943, official US policy called for the American forces in Australia to adhere as closely as possible to established Australian labour conditions when acting as employer. With an eye on wartime relations, the War Department set the principle that the "employment of Australian civilians will be in accordance with rules, hours of duty and wages as closely equivalent as practicable to those established by Australian law."<sup>16</sup> US authorities, desirous of establishing good labour relations, did not want strife due to the introduction of working conditions greatly different from those to which Australians were accustomed. Insofar as was practicable in wartime, American policy aimed at preventing any "disturbance of local wage rates and of local practices as to hours of work and conditions of service."<sup>17</sup> This was a fine aspiration; however, it required a depth of understanding that eluded the Americans. In fact, they were unfamiliar with Australian

---

<sup>13</sup> M.J. Conway to Commanding General, Base Section 7, 13 April 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5; M.J. Conway to Commanding General, Base Section 3, 14 April 1943, NA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>14</sup> L.S. Ostrander, "Civilian Personnel Division Memorandum: Revised Pay Scale," 05 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box 20, File: Civilian Employees, 3; Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 218.

<sup>15</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 217.

<sup>16</sup> M.J. Conway to Commanding Generals, Base Section 3 and 7; Commanding Officers, U.S. Advanced Base and Base Sections 1, 2, and 4, USASOS, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box 20, File: Civilian Employees.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

labour laws, practices, and history. From the top down, there had been little interest in learning about the host society on account of the belief that most Americans would be quickly passing through the country. But labour relations involved continuous elements, not just a flow through of people. American attitudes about labour organization differed from those in Australia. Moreover, in North Queensland, a particular labour culture clashed with American ideas of management.

Despite establishing good wages and a variety of benefits, labour relations between Australian workers and US forces were not always harmonious. Behind specific clusters of incidents, more general circumstances help to explain tensions. First, labour was in short supply and Americans found themselves relying on a distorted labour pool with a greater than normal proportion of misfits and older workers. Second, the American military had ideals of military professionalism and obedience that rubbed civilians the wrong way. Military command habits were not compatible with the give and take of the workplace in a free society (even when these freedoms were curtailed during the war). Third, Australian unions at the state and Commonwealth levels had realized levels of power unknown to the American political system. During the war, Labor governments governed in both Canberra and Brisbane; the Australian Workers' Union (AWU), the country's largest union, wielded great influence over the party.<sup>18</sup> Workingmen guarded their privileges and practices regardless of calls for patriotic sacrifice and remained suspicious of men in uniforms. Fourth, labour law in Australia differed from that in the United States. Australian workers had a greater sense of

---

<sup>18</sup> Ross McMullen, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, 1891-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 186-187, 190-91

solidarity than Americans were used to seeing, because, among other things, unions and employers dealt with one another on state or national levels through arbitration courts that determined collective awards (settlements). Fifth, there was an egalitarian streak among labourers that extended to their pressuring (and sometimes threatening) co-workers against taking specialized work on a permanent basis or “over-achieving.” Finally, it should be pointed out that North Queensland, the place of many disputes between US authorities and Australian labour, boasted a particular culture of “manliness,” whereby independence, defiance to authority, and a rough and tumble attitude was held in high esteem. Despite these circumstances, some individuals on both sides learned about the other’s practices and attempted to reach a working relationship.

Throughout the war, American authorities tangled with Australian workers in a variety of labour disputes. Trouble began with hiring practices. The US military often investigated the background of job applicants. That practice created tension. Many Australians believed the US authorities were overzealous in the use of background checks and denied employment on dubious grounds. Moreover, junior American officers and GIs on several occasions found themselves embroiled in disputes with Australian unions, particularly with the militant Waterside Workers’ Federation (WWF). US authorities looked on in exasperation as Australian unions occasionally slowed dockside work to a crawl in order to enforce privileges that they had won in peacetime and others that they had extracted during the wartime labour shortage. Examples of American disfavour with Australian unions surfaced in the press. Some GIs, and conservative newspaper editors, did not believe Australian workers were pulling their weight on the home front.

### **Hiring Australians: Seeds of Dispute**

Security was a chief concern of the US authorities when hiring Australian civilians. This was understandable, as many civilians would be privy to sensitive information on a daily basis. Because of the security factor, US provost marshals were charged with investigating Australian applicants. In December 1942, the Adjutant General for the United States Army Services of Supply (USASOS), L.S. Ostrander, circulated a memorandum to guide the civilian investigation section of the Provost Corps. It outlined procedures for investigating Australian civilians. American provost marshals and MPs were to investigate all civilians and if any “evidence of subversive activities or disloyalty to the Government is disclosed, the pertinent facts will be reported to the Base Section Commander for necessary action by the Military Intelligence Division.”<sup>19</sup>

Not all potential employees received the same degree of scrutiny. Ostrander’s memorandum outlined that after each base section had created a civilian investigation unit, potential employees would be investigated in one of three ways. Australians applying for minor positions with no contact with classified information were asked to furnish names of referees. US provosts contacted the referees and old employers or obtained security checks from police. The bulk of civilian applicants fell under this category, which included junior typists, seamen, labourers, and waitresses.<sup>20</sup>

Those who applied for positions as foremen, secretaries, and inspectors faced closer examination, for they would have “access to confidential information that would

---

<sup>19</sup> L.S. Ostrander to Commanding Officers all Base Sections and Commanding General, U.S. Advance Base, 24 December 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5, 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

be of value to the enemy.”<sup>21</sup> Married women also fell within this category because it was necessary to “obtain information on the husband’s occupation, character, loyalty, nationality, etc.”<sup>22</sup> For wives and others in this second category, Ostrander instructed provost marshals to use field agents, commercial agencies (private investigators), the Commonwealth Security Service or state police to determine the character and loyalty of civilians.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, in rare cases, potential employees were subjected to special investigations at the hands of American military authorities. These investigations consisted “of a thorough and complete check of the subject’s loyalty and background.”<sup>24</sup> If provost marshals dug up compromising information during the conduct of a standard investigation, a special investigation inevitably followed. Those applying for sensitive positions, such as confidential secretaries or cryptographers, also faced more scrutiny. Senior officers could also request a special investigation of civilian applicants at their own discretion.<sup>25</sup> These more intrusive investigations relied heavily on the information of field agents who were encouraged to conduct personal interviews with informants as far as possible. Provost marshals were also instructed to use commercial agencies and carry out neighbourhood loyalty checks in such investigations. In practice, this meant that interviews with neighbours helped determine the loyalty of civilian applicants.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Investigations did not always run smoothly and sometimes they angered Australian civilians. In March 1943, a US military report on working conditions stated that American hiring practices outraged civilians in Brisbane and Sydney. In several instances, private investigators hired by the US military contracted credit agencies to determine the solvency of civilian applicants. In some cases, applicants with poor credit were not hired; this understandably irked civilians because the Americans rejected them “on the basis of reasons which are not considered germane [to employment].”<sup>27</sup> The report concluded that because of the difficulties in finding enough workers in Australia “applicants should be disapproved only for security reasons or for convictions of a felony.”<sup>28</sup> Indirectly, the report testified to a labour shortage that the war had created.

One result of the March report was that Major General Richard J. Marshall, the commander of the USASOS and MacArthur’s Deputy Chief of Staff, complained through his adjutant that US investigators were relying too heavily on civilian agencies.<sup>29</sup> Citing army statistics, the general revealed that in March 1943, private detectives carried out over forty percent of investigations in Queensland. In Sydney, the percentage was closer to twenty percent. The general was upset that agencies cost the army more money than he thought they deserved, however civilian complaints about the agencies caught his attention as well. Marshall recommended that army commanders in Queensland and

---

<sup>27</sup> L.E. Patterson to Adjutant General Headquarters, 29 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box 20, File: Civilian Employees, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Major General Richard J. Marshall was the USASOS’s first commanding general. He was succeeded by Major General James L. Frink in September 1943. See Joseph Bykofsky and Harold Larson, *United States Army in World War II, The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1957), 428.



Sydney recruit more enlisted men to investigate civilian applicants and that investigators improve their efficiency.<sup>30</sup>

Marshall's recommendations were not carried out quickly enough because three weeks later he gave Chief Provost Marshal William G. Purdy a list of complaints regarding the vetting of Australian civilians. The general complained that US officials had granted many labourers in Brisbane access to military installations even though they had not undergone background checks. The problems related to private detectives were again raised and the general commented that the practices of these agencies irritated civilians who endured investigations. Purdy was ordered to terminate their use as quickly as possible. Finally, the general restated his observation that US authorities upset many civilians by turning them away for reasons other than the suspicion of disloyalty. In other words, the investigators were exceeding their mandate. These improper ground for rejections had "created ill will" among Australians and demoralized those US servicemen charged with finding civilian employees.<sup>31</sup> According to the general, "[i]t is desired that prospective employees be disapproved only if a reasonable suspicion of disloyalty exists or if they have been convicted of felonies. Less serious offences which may be discovered during the investigation will be conveyed to the employment officer for his use in designating the position to which the person is to be assigned."<sup>32</sup> The general wished to temper the zeal of his investigators in order to improve relations.

---

<sup>30</sup> M.J. Conway to Commanding General, Base Section 7, 13 April 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5; M.J. Conway to Commanding General, Base Section 3, 14 April 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>31</sup> M.J. Conway to Provost Marshal, 04 May 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Character reports taken from the US National Archives confirm that US authorities rejected some Australians for reasons other than disloyalty. In one report, the American investigator verified that Townsville resident Ian MacGregor was a loyal Australian; however, his application for employment was denied because one referee claimed MacGregor was unreliable due to drink. The investigator could also not confirm some of MacGregor's past, such as his claim that he was a veteran of the First World War.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the provost marshal in Cairns rejected Sally McMenamin's application because there was "sufficient doubt of the subject's character to cause a recommendation of disapproval of her application of employment."<sup>34</sup> The Americans did not hire Pauline Grice because work references stated she was lazy, disobedient, and involved in the theft of a diamond ring.<sup>35</sup>

It is hardly surprising that American investigators rejected civilian applicants because of poor character or drunkenness. After all, what employer wants to be saddled with ineffectual employees? That senior military officials ordered investigators to ignore such character flaws indicates how much American authorities wanted to foster good wartime relations with Australians and how desperately tight the labour market had become.

The general's letter was not the only evidence of civilian anger over American investigation practices. In cases where applicants underwent a special investigation, US

---

<sup>33</sup> "Loyalty and Character Report for War Department: Ian A. MacGregor," 05 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 197, Box 1328, File: Loyalty and Character Reports. The US National Archive possesses hundreds of character reports from which the author only took a sampling.

<sup>34</sup> Loyalty and Character Report for War Department: Sally McMenamin," 10 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 197, Box 1328, File: Loyalty and Character Reports.

<sup>35</sup> Loyalty and Character Report for War Department: Pauline Lillian Grice" 14 August 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 197, Box 1328, File: Loyalty and Character Reports.

provost marshals fingerprinted them and kept their records on file.<sup>36</sup> According to Potts and Potts, this practice upset many Australians because it “went counter to the Australian attitude that only criminals or other special classes should be subject to what many regarded as an indignity.”<sup>37</sup> Despite the Americans’ preoccupation with cultivating good relations and their urgent need for support, staff fingerprinting continued. Security became a point of contact and friction that exposed cultural differences in a common war effort.

Some Australians even resisted American investigative efforts. In July 1943, US authorities suspended investigations in Townsville because labourers there refused to co-operate. According to one report, resistance there arose because the “worker class employed on U.S. army construction projects in the Townsville area is almost wholly communistic.”<sup>38</sup> There was some truth to this claim; Communists played leading roles in several Queensland unions and Prime Minister Curtin had lifted the ban on the party in December 1942. Furthermore, Townsville possessed a history of labour militancy dating back to the First World War. Though once a bastion of “Toryism,” by 1919 it was known as “Strikesville.”<sup>39</sup> Despite the town’s history of militancy and the influence of the Communist Party, the report included quotations from a local (and purportedly) communist paper the *Sentinel*, which offered another explanation for the workers’ actions. According to the paper, workers in Townsville rightfully considered the

---

<sup>36</sup> L.S. Ostrander to Commanding Officers all Base Sections and Commanding General, U.S. Advance Base, 24 December 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5,10.

<sup>37</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 218.

<sup>38</sup> “Investigation of Civilian Employees,” 05 July 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>39</sup> Evans, *A History of Queensland*, 162,191.

Americans' questions pointlessly intrusive. The paper found fault with efforts to garner information about applicants' parents, hobbies, and religion. The *Sentinel* concluded that "[d]ocuments such as this are an insult to all honest, useful people, and are entirely out of place in the Anti-Axis war effort. Workers must oppose Fascist tendencies like [these] wherever they appear."<sup>40</sup> The workers' sentiments expressed in the *Sentinel* indicate the American military had certainly encountered an unfamiliar political culture. If one side thought the other was Fascist, then the so-called Fascists found their accusers communistic.

### **The Clash of Work Cultures: North Queensland**

Other modes of work-related disputes erupted between Australian labourers and American officials. These rows offer other reasons for tense wartime relations between the US military and Australian civilians. One group with whom American authorities had particularly poor relations were the unionized dockworkers of the communist controlled Waterside Workers' Federation.<sup>41</sup> The WWF had a history of militancy. In 1919, it supported a meat workers strike in Townsville when more conservative unions refused. In 1939, the union's MacKay branch, in support of the Soviet-German nonaggression pact, refused to load supplies bound for Britain because they did not want

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> W.J. Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia* (Haymarket, Australia: Australian Labour Movement Publications, 1986), 110, 241; D.J. Murphy, ed., *Queensland 1889-1965: The Big Strikes* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1983), 42-43.

to aid a reactionary war effort.<sup>42</sup> Wartime labour relations continued to be rough in North Queensland; one will recall that a US army report surmised the Communist Party controlled the region and that unions in the area were strong and pugnacious. That report also observed that American officers had “clashed with local powers at the start, and a persistent hostility was engendered.”<sup>43</sup> In Townsville, some of the local political leaders were in fact leftist dissidents thrown out of the Australian Labor Party, including seven of the city’s eleven aldermen. These parties stirred up trouble against the Americans.<sup>44</sup>

American reports probably exaggerated communist control of the region. Still, North Queensland did possess a history of leftist militancy and some unions like the WWF had communist affiliations. As mentioned above, Townsville had picked up the moniker “Strikesville” during the First World War and the Marxist International Workers of the World had had a significant presence in North Queensland in the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>45</sup> It is also probably no surprise that Fred Patterson, the only avowed member of the Communist Party to sit in any Australian legislature, was elected to the Queensland parliament from Townsville in 1944.<sup>46</sup>

The first indication of trouble between the US military and Queensland workers reached official channels in December 1942, when Major E. Prestrud, of the Army Transportation Service (ATS), complained to his superiors that the loading and unloading

---

<sup>42</sup> Doug Hunt, “The Townsville Meatworkers’ Strike,” in *The Big Strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*, D.J. Murphy (ed.) (St. Lucia, Queensland: The University of Queensland Press, 1983), 158; Evans, *A History of Queensland*, 190.

<sup>43</sup> L.E. Patterson to Adjutant General Headquarters, 29 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box 20, File: Civilian Employees, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 258.

<sup>45</sup> Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 160, 177-78.

<sup>46</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 258.

of ships in Cairns took far too long and ships could not be worked round the clock. Although manpower shortages were partially to blame for the sluggishness, the major alleged the behaviour of Australian stevedores also played a role. According to him, large numbers of longshoremen failed to show up for work on a regular basis, which hindered worker output. Prestrud had to inform his superiors that a ship loaded with supplies lay idle at the docks because the Australians refused to work in the rain. The major ended his report with the hope that the situation would improve with the possible arrival of 100 new longshoremen.<sup>47</sup>

Conditions in Cairns did not improve; Prestrud was still grumbling about waterside labour in February 1943. He reiterated the need for more stevedores, but significantly his chief complaint was the intransigence of the dockside workers themselves. In particular, Prestrud complained of the Australians' refusal to work even in light rain. Not only did this slow down the loading and unloading of vessels but it created a logistical knock-on effect, as it was impossible to estimate when a ship would be emptied. The result was a scheduling nightmare. Prestrud again hoped that more labourers would arrive to improve the situation, but he pointed out that the additional 100 longshoremen expected in December 1942 had never materialized.<sup>48</sup>

Cairns was not the only port in North Queensland where Americans found little to recommend about Australian longshoremen. Americans stationed in Townsville had their share of complaints. An American intelligence report from December 1942 relayed

---

<sup>47</sup> E. Prestrud to the Chief of Water Section, Transportation Corps, 16 December 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>48</sup> E. Prestrud to Chief of Water Transport Division, 18 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

a tale that implied Australian indifference, laziness, and criminality at the Townsville docks. American agents stationed at Townsville's jetty observed Australian labourers unload cargo from a Dutch freighter and noted that many cardboard boxes containing sardines were damp and falling apart. The agents watched as the longshoremen loaded intact cases onto a US army truck and threw loose tins into a large basket. Their curiosities roused by the damaged cases, the agents inspected the ship's hold where they found wet and broken cases of canned fish and six cases of damp fifty-calibre ammunition.<sup>49</sup> An American MP told them the stevedores had quit working the night before because of rain and had failed to close the hatch. The MP also revealed that many stevedores had stolen cargo the night before, but because the Americans were "powerless to search" the Australians, they got away with pilfering.<sup>50</sup> The report concluded that a large number of cases were damaged and that the loose tins were roughly handled. Because the dockworkers threw the cans into a basket "hundreds of tins of fish will be rusted, many will be spoiled from denting and breaking, and without doubt many will never reach their proper destination as they were in loose piles and in baskets in the hold of the ship and on the jetty."<sup>51</sup>

The dockworkers' indifference confounded the agents; they reckoned the problems were preventable by simply putting a tarp over the hatch when the rain started.<sup>52</sup> But the incident discloses far more than carelessness. The stevedores continued in wartime to do what dockworkers had traditionally done and condoned as a

---

<sup>49</sup> N.B.S. to Chief of Transportation, 28 December 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

as prerequisite of the job. They pinched some of the cargo. One study of the London and New York waterfronts points out that “[w]hether goods were taken for immediate consumption or use beyond the dock gates, the dockworkers shared an abiding sense of entitlement and opportunism” when it came to pilfering.<sup>53</sup> Conceivably too, the damaged tins were destined for Townsville cupboards or the black market. In 1942, an American general complained to MacArthur that pilfering by Australians had reached epidemic proportions.<sup>54</sup> Possibly a London or New York civil dock foreman would have understood the practice and the need to look the other way. American army officers were not so obliging.

In December 1942, Captain Vincent Berrey, the marine superintendent in charge of the American personnel at the Townsville docks, produced a report on the labour situation in the town which mirrored many of the problems in Cairns. Berrey cited the slow unloading of cargo as a major problem, which he partially attributed to the age of many of the longshoremen. Berrey reported that more than ninety percent of the labourers were over fifty and their work was “not satisfactory due to the fact that this work is so heavy that they are unable to keep the pace required.”<sup>55</sup> The relatively advanced age of the men also explained why so many failed to report for work. To compensate for the lack of manpower, Berry stated that Australian servicemen sometimes worked the docks, but this too created problems. They were often unwilling to work hard when they learned that the civilian labourers received a higher wage than they did for the

---

<sup>53</sup> Colin J. Davis, *Waterfront Revolts: New York and London Dockworkers, 1946-61* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 40.

<sup>54</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 231.

<sup>55</sup> Vincent J. Berrey to Captain Colin Craig, 23 December 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.



same job. To rectify the labour problem in Cairns, Berrey suggested that American GIs unload cargo which would “increase the efficiency at the port one hundred percent.”<sup>56</sup>

Captain C. Craig, an ATS superintendent, passed Berrey’s report up the chain of command and provided his own appraisal of the labour situation in North Queensland. Craig informed the Chief of Water Section Transport that the conditions in Townsville were “rapidly getting worse and instead of straightening things out we only seem to be suffering more inconveniences and delays to our vessels.”<sup>57</sup> Again, the shortage of stevedores was cited as one reason for the poor work. However, Craig added that Australian army labourers were now doing all of the unloading because civilian longshoremen refused to work in the rain. Since it was now the rainy season in North Queensland, this meant that civilian workers had left the docks. The Americans could not wrap their heads around this refusal to work; if Allied soldiers were fighting and dying in the rains of New Guinea, how could wharf labourers walk off the job because of inclement weather? Craig saw only one solution out of the difficulties: replace Australian labour with US army work battalions.<sup>58</sup>

After several weeks, during which time the situation in Townsville did not improve, Craig penned another report about the problems at the city’s docks. In his letter to Colonel Homer C. Brown, the commander of Base Section Two, Craig complained that “longshore labor at this port is a serious problem both to the lack of sufficient numbers and to the Waterside Workers’ Union regulations which seem to give the men

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> C. Craig to Chief of Water Section, T.C., 26 December 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

too many privileges.”<sup>59</sup> Because of the dearth of workers, Craig reported, it had been necessary to import labourers from Sydney. This expedient alleviated the labour shortage somewhat, but it also had the unforeseen effect of destroying what little co-operation existed between US authorities and Townsville stevedores, who did not want workers from outside the state diluting the local pool of labour.<sup>60</sup>

Captain Craig also reiterated the longshoremen’s aversion to getting wet on the job and mentioned their constant “tea-o’s” and “smoke-o’s” during the course of a shift. The report revealed a cultural gap that was all the more perplexing to the American because of the common language and cause. The captain also claimed that Townsville’s stevedores were “found many times to be thieves...if not saboteurs.”<sup>61</sup> Once again, the captain suggested that only assigning US work battalions to the docks would increase efficiency. When Craig used two work companies of GIs on one occasion, he maintained that “for the first time in Townsville since I have been here were ships ever worked somewhere close to the tonnage that could be expected without excuses for some kind of delay.”<sup>62</sup> Craig followed this claim with the thinly veiled protest against General R.J. Marshall’s order prohibiting the use of GIs as dockworkers until local civilian labour was exhausted. Craig sardonically observed that “this happened years ago as far as I can tell.”<sup>63</sup> In concluding his report, Craig urged his superiors to take some measures to

---

<sup>59</sup> C. Craig to Colonel Homer C. Brown, 28 January 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5, 2.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

rectify the problems at the port.<sup>64</sup> Here it is important to contrast the policy struck at the height of officialdom with the effects that policy created at the local level. As we shall see below, MacArthur had prohibited the use of army labour, save for emergency situations, in an effort to placate Australian dockworkers and to free up military personnel. A junior officer had none of these concerns and could only see that the use of army personnel would alleviate his problems.

Craig's protests were of little avail; labour relations continued to suffer in Townsville. Because he got no satisfaction from Brown, Craig wrote to Colonel T.G. Plant, the army's Water Transport Division Chief on February 16. Craig included his usual complaints about unions and the poor work of the dockworkers, but he also levelled criticism at the Commonwealth's Stevedoring Industry Commission (SIC). According to Craig, the commission's efforts to organize the stevedores failed because it did not assign work according to ability but rather by an arbitrary list of eligible workers. Wharf labourers were allowed to pick and chose the jobs they wanted regardless of their skill level or experience.<sup>65</sup> This work organization resulted in great inefficiencies, he alleged, because new gangs formed every day; even when ships took days to unload, work crews did not return to the same jobs. The dockworkers' control over their own work clashed with an American officer's sense of urgency and efficiency.

Some context is required to better understand American complaints about worker privileges and power. It was not union regulations that allowed the waterside workers to flex their muscles, but the organization of the stevedoring industry in general. Arising

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>65</sup> Butlin, *War Economy*, 228.

out of complaints of worker inefficiencies and the fear that men were avoiding military call ups by claiming to be wharf labourers, the Commonwealth government created the Stevedoring Industry Commission in April 1942. The commission had a similar role to the Manpower Directorate but was dedicated to dock work only. The SIC was charged with providing stevedoring labour, increasing efficiency, and improving working conditions on the dockside. The commission consisted of an arbitration court judge and a seven member committee. Three members of the committee represented ship owners and stevedoring employers, three others belonged to the unions, and the final member was a non-voting government representative. At each Australian port, the SIC also established sub-committees (comprising of representatives from owners and the WWF) to manage waterside work under its control and directives.<sup>66</sup>

In practice, the commission did not improve the efficiency of stevedores and probably made the quality of work worse in Australian ports. The SIC allowed dockworkers to pick their jobs regardless of their skill; the practice resulted in great delays in loading and unloading ships. Although, S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin claim this practice ended at some point during the war, it is clear that it lingered as a problem in 1943. In addition, though in principle the commission had the right to dismiss employees, the fact that three union members sat on it made this unlikely. When the commission actually tried to use this power, it faced a confrontation with the WWF and experienced work delays at Australian ports.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>67</sup> Butlin, *War Economy*, 228, 217; C. Craig to Colonel Homer C. Brown, 28 January 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5, 3.

The make up of the SIC may explain why Craig reported it had dismissed American complaints and, in a tit-for-tat manner, blamed slow work and disorganization on the US military. Craig defended himself and his comrades against this slight. “This so-called confusion cannot be helped in some cases, and what appears to be confusion to some people not familiar with steamship operations is really practical in the loading and discharging of vessels.”<sup>68</sup> To buttress his claims of union inefficiency and commission mismanagement, Craig provided Colonel Plant with statistics which demonstrated the off loading of sugar had dropped from 25 to 30 tonnes an hour to 10 to 24 an hour. This drop in efficiency coincided with the commission’s decision to organize the gangs by list rather than skill. Craig added that deliberate slowdowns on the part of the stevedores compounded the loss of efficiency. He complained that “the stevedores at this port, on any occasion that may arise, attempt to slow down the work even more by complaining about conditions under which they must work and some of them refusing to handle certain commodities.”<sup>69</sup> Dragging out the work and organizing gangs from daily lists were ways that Australian “wharfies” increased earnings for themselves and spread them over men of varying abilities. Worker solidarity, resistance to the demands of owners, and the fight for better work conditions had a long history in Queensland. Dockworkers were simply doing what Australian workers had done since the nineteenth century. Indeed, these tactics had an effect, as work conditions improved during the war at Australian wharfs.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> C. Craig to Colonel T.G. Plant, 16 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Evans, *A History of Queensland*, 120; Butlin, *War Economy*, 229.

It was not just American authorities who complained of the poor work of Australian stevedores. In February 1943, the Australian superintendent of the jetty, apparently at Craig's request, drafted a detailed letter concerning labour conditions in Townsville. "I have been associated with this wharf for sixteen years," he wrote, "and during that period I have never seen or experienced such conditions as apply here today."<sup>71</sup> Like Craig, the Australian blamed the poor behaviour of civilian dockworkers for problems. According to the superintendent "[t]he position as regards to labor on this wharf has gradually deteriorated until, at the present time, the results shown by the men, both in their conduct on the job, and the manner in which they are carrying out their duties, calls for some very drastic action on the part of the authorities who are controlling the port."<sup>72</sup> The superintendent cited the lethargy of civilian dockworkers and claimed, as Craig had, that the work rate had dropped 30 to 50 percent. No amount of cajoling could persuade the stevedores to work faster and any effort to do so slowed work further. The superintendent did not consider the age of the men to be the reason for slow rate of work; instead, he blamed the workers' general disregard for authority. Exasperated by the problems at the port, the superintendent stated "[o]n every occasion that presents itself a certain number of men will cause trouble and friction with the men in charge of the jobs, pinpricking tactics, which are of no real benefit to the men other than to exemplify the fact that no authority can be exercised over them."<sup>73</sup> This account captures management's attitude toward waterside workers. As mentioned above, the WWF, to

---

<sup>71</sup> Wharf Superintendent to Captain Craig, 12 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5, 1.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

which virtually all stevedores belonged, had a long history of militancy and radicalism. Still, this was also a display of the rebelliousness of the North Queenslander. As Potts and Potts note Cairns and Townsville “shared a historical sense of grievance towards their state and national governments, compounded by a long held sense of neglect, culminating in a “new state” movement.”<sup>74</sup> One should also remember from chapter one that the region had a history of parochialism which meant local concerns outweighed events outside the region. Apparently, this included the war as well.

The superintendent also noted pilfering was an endemic problem at the wharf. Civilian stevedores stole from any ship that made its way to port and displayed a particular fondness for beer and spirits. The level of pilfering was so high that he believed that stolen wares supplied Townsville’s thriving black market. Watchmen assigned to stop the thieving were threatened or bribed into silence. On one of the few occasions when a guard did report the pilfering of a vessel, dockworkers later attacked him and tore off his clothes.<sup>75</sup>

Another interesting parallel with earlier American complaints was the wharf superintendent’s claim that a minority of communist subversives and the weak management of the stevedoring commission contributed to the poor work at the dock.<sup>76</sup> The Australian maintained the commission was unwilling to discipline dockworkers for indolence, which meant frequent absenteeism and an unwillingness to work in the rain;

---

<sup>74</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 259.

<sup>75</sup> Wharf Superintendent to Captain Craig, 12 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Claims concerning the communist sympathies of some dockside workers had merit. In fact, the WWF was affiliated with the Australian Communist Party. See Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia*, 110; D.J. Murphy, ed., *Queensland 1889-1965: The Big Strikes*, 42-43.

he also noted the absence of discipline gave the workers *carte blanche* with regard to the jobs they chose; as a result, no one signed up for the more arduous tasks. Trouble at the wharf also occurred because the dockworkers refused to handle unwieldy cargo and ignored orders to switch jobs. When foremen tried to exert some discipline, the men often verbally abused and threatened them. In several instances, the superintendent observed stevedores would sooner quit work for the day rather than shift to a different job. These men undeniably worked to the beat of their own drum, not the military's. The superintendent concluded that "the waterside worker through his officials has gained full control of the labor handled on the wharf today."<sup>77</sup>

Other accounts from management complained about waterside workers in Townsville. A report from Howard Smith Ltd., an Australian shipping company, corroborated Craig's observations, stating that many dockworkers left work at the slightest amount of rain and employers tried to have military gangs on hand whenever there was a chance of inclement weather. Furthermore, the company noted stevedores would not give military ships priority, which infuriated American authorities; to support this claim, the report recounted two occasions when stevedores refused to transfer from Howard Smith owned ships to American transports. The author added that this refusal violated Stevedoring Commission regulations. Although the company reported these incidents to the commission, there was no expectation of any reprimand because "the

---

<sup>77</sup> Wharf Superintendent to Captain Craig, 12 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5, 2.



Commission in the past have [sic] failed to apply penalties on defaulters which they are supposed to have the power to impose.”<sup>78</sup>

When trying to explain labour truculence and inefficiency, the company report did not cite low wages, as they were in fact significantly higher than the highest wages enjoyed before the Great Depression. Instead, the author reiterated the Stevedoring Commission’s unwillingness to impose discipline on dockworkers as the main reason for inefficiency at the jetty. The report even addressed the relatively old age of many of the workers, but argued it was younger workers who were indolent while “the older men are the more loyal and do the better work.”<sup>79</sup>

Although reports of poor relations and labour lethargy reached the headquarters of the USASOS, nothing came down from the higher levels of officialdom to improve conditions. Americans in Townsville were still complaining of poor worker output in March 1943. This time a lieutenant in the Quartermaster Corps observed Australian dockworkers leaving frozen and chilled food to sit on the Townsville jetty. Because the food was meant for an American transport ship, the lieutenant secured the perishables to prevent their spoilage. A couple of hours later, he returned to the wharf, only to find Australian soldiers unloading crates of oranges down a staircase “by the simple expedient of letting them slide down a steep plank on to a pile of rope.”<sup>80</sup> The crates broke open on their journey down the plank. The Diggers responsible for the damage met the American’s complaints with indifference; only with the arrival of an Australian officer

---

<sup>78</sup> Howard Smith Ltd., “Waterside Workers at Townsville,” no date, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Grant Healey to Captain Hastings, 01 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

did they stop sending the crates down the plank. Although the malefactors were soldiers and not civilian stevedores, the lieutenant used the incident to vent his frustrations over Australian dockworkers in general:

The essence of the matter is this: what would have happened to the oranges if I hadn't shown up? Every crate would have been broken up. As it was, only the first six were damaged. Any time that we send either perishable or gratuitous items to the jetty, we have to have one of our men accompany each truck or the load will be pilfered. Frequently we get loads of rations on the jetty and they have to wait for hours to be unloaded. It seems to me that we have enough trouble to contend with in getting our stuff down to the jetty in the short periods of time allotted without having to then supervise the loading of the ship to be sure that the supplies get aboard intact. Can't we do something about it?<sup>81</sup>

The quartermaster's frustration over the misdeeds of Australian stevedores and Diggers is palpable.

Undoubtedly, the accelerated pace of wartime shipping created intrinsic difficulties at wharves. However, long-standing labour practices, perquisites, attitudes, historical suspicions, and pre-war labour politics contributed to basic failures of understanding between dockworkers and the Americans in charge of unloading operations. For their part, the American officers brought with them the attitudes of military command-and-obey, the presumption of American managerial efficiency, and a feeling of superiority. The American military's way of looking at labour and politics was about to become more fully revealed. In the microcosm of the Townsville docks, it is possible to witness continuity between the post-1917 "Red Scare" and the anti-communist investigations in the United States in the early 1950s.

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

### **American Investigators, Australian Communists**

Eventually, authorities up the chain of command could no longer ignore the stream of complaints coming from Townsville. Although military officials did not pressure Queensland or Commonwealth authorities to impose order on dockside labour, US army intelligence started surveillance of the Townsville wharf at the end of February 1943. Anonymous Agent 1975, sent to spy on the Australians at the wharf, produced a series of intelligence reports that confirmed general inefficiency on the part of Australian dockworkers. In his February 23 report, the agent summed up that slow work was due to inefficiency, the age of the crew, poor supervision, and “improper allocation of workers more fitted for certain jobs.”<sup>82</sup> Significantly, Agent 1975 reported that he could not yet determine if the inefficiency he witnessed was deliberate or not.<sup>83</sup>

The next day he returned to the jetty to watch WWF gangs at the port. Again, he observed slow, inefficient work; in particular, he noted that the workers did not specialize in any particular job. The agent also observed certain labourers admonish their co-workers for working too hard. In fact, the agent observed that while a work crew busily lashed down deck cargo on an army transport, one member of the group spent most of his time complaining, cursing, and objecting to the task at hand. Apparently, the worker was furious that the other workers were not equally outraged over the work they had to do.

---

<sup>82</sup> Agent 1975, “Stoppage of work by Waterside Workers, Port of Townsville, Qld,” 23 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Agent 1975 assured his superiors that he would keep rabble-rousers under close supervision.<sup>84</sup>

One man the agent kept under particularly close watch was William Ford, the WWF vigilance officer in Townsville. On February 25, Agent 1975 described Ford as a prominent Communist leader and a subversive largely responsible for labour problems at the docks. To understand what average workers thought of the union delegate, Agent 1975 informally interviewed dockside labourers. He found one worker who considered Ford a “Red Bastard” and opined the union would be better off without him.<sup>85</sup> This testimony, from what Agent 1975 deemed a “loyal” waterside worker, contrasted with the comments of a suspected “agitator” who told Agent 1975 that Ford “kept the bloody Capitalists from working us seven days a week for nothing.”<sup>86</sup>

If some stevedores saw Ford as their champion, the testimony of other witnesses suggests he was a troublemaker of the first order. A foreman with the Adelaide Steamship Company, a Mr. McNeale, recounted several incidents where Ford injected himself into the workings at the dockside and generally made a nuisance of himself. McNeale disclosed that on February 25, Ford arrived at the jetty and demanded to know why GIs were unloading cargo instead of union gangs. McNeale replied that it was none of his business, and when Ford discovered the Americans were still unloading cargo the

---

<sup>84</sup> Agent 1975, “Stoppage of work by Waterside Workers, Port of Townsville, Qld.,” 24 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>85</sup> Agent 1975, “Stoppage of work by Waterside Workers, Port of Townsville, Qld.,” 25 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5; Agent 1975, “Stoppage of work by Waterside Workers, Port of Townsville, Qld.,” 26 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>86</sup> Agent 1975, “Stoppage of work by Waterside Workers, Port of Townsville, Qld.,” 26 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

next day, he demanded they be taken off the job and replaced with union crews. Since it was not within McNeale's ambit to order the Americans off the job, he directed Ford to Captain Berrey of the ATS. Expecting little satisfaction from the American, Ford chose not to seek Berrey out.<sup>87</sup>

A few days later Ford again tried to disrupt work on the jetty and this time he was successful. He ordered a work crew on an American transport to place on a crane sling just nine sacks of sugar per load rather than the customary twelve. Ford reasoned that since the crew was two men short, they should lift lighter loads. McNeale recounted that he objected to this slowdown because the crew was not short of men and, in fact, the two men who were absent represented extra labour. It was not until McNeale called the union president that the crew began to load the sling to its full capacity.<sup>88</sup>

On March 5, Agent 1975 also interviewed a Lieutenant Bellamain who was an Australian Army Service Corps officer. He too had some unkind words for Ford. Bellamain told the agent that he once caught Ford on the dock having a meeting with union workers and Australian army labourers. When ordered to stop because he had "no right to make speeches to soldiers," Ford replied that the lieutenant had no jurisdiction over him and that he was in fact talking to civilians; it was not his fault that some soldiers stopped to participate in the meeting as well. On another occasion, Bellamain recounted how he had kicked Ford off the wharf because he was not holding his dock pass. Ford exclaimed to all who could hear that such treatment amounted to persecution. The result

---

<sup>87</sup> Agent 1975, "Stoppage of work by Waterside Workers, Port of Townsville, Qld.," 05 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

of this action, which Agent 1975 described as an effort to harass and demean Ford, saw the WWF vigilance officer become an instant martyr among many stevedores. The interview concluded with Bellamain telling the agent that Ford was “responsible for most of the trouble at the wharf.”<sup>89</sup>

After two weeks collecting intelligence about the labour conditions at the Townsville jetty, Agent 1975 produced his final report for army intelligence on 8 March 1943. Although reiterating many past observations, the agent ultimately concluded the

Waterside Workers’ Federation is dominated by a minority of communist agitators, who, under the guise of improving working conditions, urge the workers to go slow and cause them to defiantly refuse to do certain things ordered by the stevedoring foremen which are necessary to the expedient loading, discharging and dispatching of ships, and which are legal according to the union agreement.<sup>90</sup>

Agent 1975 believed that the agitators were numerous, but Ford was the “motivating force behind them.”<sup>91</sup> Ford had abused his position as vigilance officer because he “interferes and causes minor disturbances when there has been no complaint by the workers, and that when instances arrive where the workers are not within their rights, he sides with the workers regardless.”<sup>92</sup>

Although Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union marked the period where international communism committed a hasty volte-face in favour of the war, Ford’s behaviour shows that not all communists were willing to aid Russia’s new western allies to their utmost. Marxist ideology and personalities could still trump orders from on high.

---

<sup>89</sup> Agent 1975, “Stoppage of work by Waterside Workers, Port of Townsville, Qld.,” 05 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>90</sup> Agent 1975, “Stoppage of work by Waterside Workers, Port of Townsville, Qld.,” 08 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Communists like Ford likely found it hard to aid a war effort that communists had been denouncing as imperialist since 1939. Historians have admitted that despite orders from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia to support the war effort *in toto*, the party was only partially successful in establishing industrial peace among the unions it controlled during this period.<sup>93</sup>

To improve the conditions at the jetty, Agent 1975 recommended that authorities bar Ford and other vociferous agitators from the area. However, he did not discount that this might actually strengthen Ford's hold on the dockworkers, as he would become an instant martyr. The investigator even believed the slow work was technically sabotage, although he acknowledged the WWF would argue that it was only trying to improve the conditions of its members. In the investigator's estimation, the union's leaders supported actions that were grossly negligent and in some cases carried out in a "viciously wilful manner."<sup>94</sup> According to Agent 1975, the workers were deliberately obstructing the war effort, which was indeed sabotage. Nonetheless, because Townsville boasted a strong communist and labour following, the American doubted any prosecutions for sabotage would result in convictions.<sup>95</sup> This unwillingness to combat labour obstruction at the docks meant that there would be no real improvement in the quality of work at the jetty so long as it was under civilian control. Because of this, Agent 1975 recommended the American military take control of the port or at least have US soldiers exclusively handle American ships.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia*, 115; Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 258.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

Colonel Brown passed the intelligence reports on to General Frink, the commander of the USASOS and offered his own appraisal of the situation in Townsville. Knowing that there were American plans to expand Townsville's jetty, Brown believed that such a move was impracticable so long as it remained under civilian control. The colonel championed Agent 1975's recommendation to place the area under US jurisdiction and stated "it will be necessary for the U.S. government to lease, buy, or secure control of the entire wharf and jetty facilities, and exercise complete jurisdiction, including the furnishing of necessary labor in the form of U.S. troops."<sup>97</sup> Frink probably ignored the recommendation; there is no evidence that he forwarded it up the chain of command. If he did pass on the proposal to MacArthur, the commander-in-chief did not act on it, for the jetty remained under Australian jurisdiction for the duration of the war. MacArthur, who was committed to maintaining good relations with Prime Minister Curtin and the Australian people generally, would have foreseen the labour trouble such a move would have created.<sup>98</sup>

Those Americans left to administer cargo in Townsville probably wished senior officialdom had considered a takeover because relations continued to deteriorate during 1943. Only a few days after sending his report to General Frink, Colonel Brown received another report of union interference from Captain Craig. The captain reported that on March 28, a Mr. Christopher, who was the vice-president of the WWF in Townsville, ordered a group of ten non-union labourers in the employ of the US army not to clean the

---

<sup>97</sup> Colonel Homer C. Brown to Commanding General, Headquarters USASOS, 19 March 1943, , NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>98</sup> Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1964), 151.



‘tween decks of a US transport ship. These men, although not members of the WWF, promptly followed Christopher’s command. Upon hearing about the work stoppage, Captain Berrey sought out Christopher and demanded an explanation. When asked why he had ordered the men off the job, the Australian replied that the cleaning of the ‘tween decks was union work and the non-unionized civilian employees of the US army had no right to that job. Berrey told Christopher he was wrong and ordered the men back to work. When the workers refused, the American fired them on the spot and confiscated their dock passes.<sup>99</sup>

In an effort to resolve the dispute, Berrey, with Captain Craig, entered discussions with Christopher and the local union president, a Mr. Smith, later that day. After the Americans explained their workers had the right to sweep decks and clean ships because those tasks did not constitute stevedoring work, the union delegates grudgingly conceded that Christopher acted beyond his remit. It looked like the union had admitted defeat in this case, although the next day, union firebrand William Ford persuaded another group of civilian labourers to stop work. When American remonstrations did not persuade the labourers to return to work, they too were fired. After terminating the workers’ employment, Craig told Ford that he “had no jurisdiction what so ever over any personnel employed by the United States Army and that [the US authorities] were making an issue of the incident.”<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> C. Craig to Colonel Homer G. Brown, 29 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

In an effort to reach an accord, Berrey and Craig again met with union president Smith on March 29; these talks proved fruitless. Piqued by union intransigence and convinced the WWF had no business ordering non-union civilians off the job, Craig looked up the most recent industrial award granted to the WWF. The American learned that nowhere “does it state that it is the work of the Waterside Workers to clean the tween decks or holds of a vessel.”<sup>101</sup> Craig even quoted, in his report to Colonel Brown, the judgment of the ruling of Judge George James Dethridge, which spelled out the scope of the award:

The work covered by the Federal Waterside Workers' Award is in substance concerned with the loading or unloading of vessels. It is done either on or with the vessel itself and its apparatus, or on wharf or other place used for loading or discharging operations. No question arises here as to work done on or with the vessel's apparatus and nothing said here applies to that branch of the work. I am only concerned with that branch of the work done outside the vessel in a place used for loading or discharging operations.<sup>102</sup>

Having demonstrated that union delegates had overstepped their authority, Craig recommended WWF representatives be barred from boarding vessels or talking to civilian employees unless they had the permission of the marine superintendent. In his conclusion to Brown, Craig summed up relations at the jetty:

The apparent tactics of the Waterside Workers at the Port of Townsville appears to be unwillingness to co-operate with the U.S. Forces. The incident above shows that the work aboard the ship was deliberately stopped without any thought as to the urgency for war materials and troops to be shipped to their destinations on time. This delay could have been avoided if we had been working the ship with U.S. Army troops which are so sorely needed at the Port of Townsville.

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. Justice George James Dethridge was a chief judge on the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, which was tasked with ruling on industrial disputes.

Colonel Brown also forwarded this report to General Frink and again included some of his own views of labour relations in Townsville. According to Brown “[t]he report distinctly shows interference with the efforts of the United States Army by Australian Labor Unions; furthermore, it shows interference with civilian labor hired by the United States Army.”<sup>103</sup> The colonel added that he fully supported Craig’s decision to sack the labourers who refused his order to return to work; he also told Frink he was investigating if union representatives should be allowed on US army ships “for the purpose of agitating civilian employees.”<sup>104</sup> Hinting at a possible solution to the problems at the jetty, Brown reported he had replaced the fired civilians with fifteen US soldiers. Perhaps, foreseeing criticism for not replacing the workers with more civilians, the colonel added that the work was essential to the war effort.<sup>105</sup>

The WWF’s interference with non-union labour prompted more surveillance at Townsville’s jetty. This time round, the intelligence officer for Base Section Two ordered Agent 1966 to interview some of those involved in the incidents, which included those sacked for refusing to return to work. The agent recorded that, to a man, the civilian labourers were content with working for the Americans because their wages were the highest they had ever enjoyed. However, all the interviewees maintained they would not return to work because they feared union reprisals. Agent 1966 reported that labourer George Gould told him that if he had returned to work he would have been marked a scab. A scab, Gould told the agent, “would not be able to obtain work anywhere, with all

---

<sup>103</sup> Homer C. Brown to Commanding General, Headquarters USASOS, 31 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

the possibilities of receiving bodily harm from Union men, and [be] ignored and abused in public.”<sup>106</sup> Another labourer, Jack McCarthy, told the agent that he understood Captain Berrey’s decision to fire him and the other men, and held no animosity towards him. He too feared the dreaded scab label and believed that he really had no choice but to refuse Berrey’s order, otherwise he would never find work. McCarthy also believed that he could expect union violence if he returned to the job. Labourer William Ford (not the union official) echoed the same fears in his interview and added that “the Unions are very strong in Australia, and a man has to have a good labour record to join.”<sup>107</sup> Because he was already a member of the Meatworkers’ Union, Ford told the agent that he had “no desire to receive a “black mark” on his labour record, in spite of the fact the highest wages he ever earned in his life were with the U.S. army.”<sup>108</sup> Agent 1966’s report stressed that the workers refused to work not out of labour solidarity but out of fear of the WWF.

On April 10, Agent 1966 submitted his final report to N.F. Marshall, the intelligence officer for Base Section Two. The agent concluded that the WWF was uncooperative with the US forces in the area and that Vice-President Christopher in particular had interfered with the “free movement of the United States Army” through his actions at the Townsville jetty.<sup>109</sup> In the agent’s view, such behaviour amounted to nothing less than sabotage because the ship was delayed. Furthermore, he believed if the

---

<sup>106</sup> Agent 1966, “Memorandum to the Office in Charge,” 05 April 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Agent 1966 “Waterside Workers Union Townsville, Qld.,” 10 April 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

ship had been delayed by someone other than a union representative that person “would have been charged with hampering the war effort of the United States and would have been prosecuted accordingly.”<sup>110</sup> The agent dismissed the idea, given the political fallout and damage to wartime relations that would have occurred had the Americans prosecuted Australian union delegates. Agent 1966’s appraisal demonstrates just how seriously the US authorities in Townsville considered the actions of union officials. The agent restated the earlier suggestion that some military authority, be it Australian or American, take over the Townville jetty. The agent also recommended that higher authorities officially protest the behaviour of Vice-President Christopher otherwise “the United States Army official at the wharf [Captain Berrey] cannot carry out his orders or functions so as to successfully prosecute this war.”<sup>111</sup>

### **Political Understanding and Diplomatic Words**

It is almost certain that senior commanders did not lodge any official protest against the WWF’s actions in Townsville. If we turn to the strained relations between the WWF and US authorities in Melbourne, we see that General MacArthur did not wish to antagonize the WWF in that city or make Australian domestic politics difficult for Prime Minister Curtin. MacArthur probably maintained the same approach with the WWF in Townsville; recommendations that would have frayed relations were ignored. In February 1943, Prime Minister Curtin wrote to MacArthur and told him of a complaint he received from the secretary of the WWF concerning the US military in Melbourne. The

---

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

WWF secretary stated that on January 12, the US military used its own personnel to discharge vessels instead of union labour, which was readily available. Curtin reminded MacArthur that it was the practice of the Australian army not to use its men as stevedores until all civilian labour was engaged for that purpose; he thought he had understood the US army generally adhered to the same principle. Here it is important to note that the WWF did not wield any power within the Australian Labor Party (ALP); indeed its militancy put it at odds with the ALP in the past.<sup>112</sup> However the employment of GIs as dockside workers worried Curtin because their past use had provoked union hostility. The fear of a work stoppage or other trouble at the Melbourne docks troubled Curtin to the point that he made the following appeal to MacArthur:

[w]hile I fully realise that military considerations may, in certain circumstances, make it necessary that waterside work should be performed by Service personnel, it would greatly assist to maintain harmonious relations on the waterfront if I were in a position to assure the Waterside Workers' Federation that it is the policy of the United States Army authorities, in non-operational areas, to employ Service labour on waterside work only after available supplies or civilian labour have been exhausted.<sup>113</sup>

MacArthur's response two weeks later is indicative of the co-operative relationship he enjoyed with Curtin and confirms he intended to maintain good relations with Australia's unions and the WWF in particular. The general first assuaged Curtin's concerns regarding the use of US troops as stevedores; he confirmed that his existing instructions to the US forces in Australia were to "provide for the maximum utilization of civilian labor."<sup>114</sup> With respect to the WWF's complaint concerning Melbourne, MacArthur

---

<sup>112</sup> Ross McMullen, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, 1891-1991*, 159; Murphy (ed.), *The Big Strikes*, 158.

<sup>113</sup> John Curtin to General MacArthur, 13 February 1943, MacArthur Archives, RG 4, Reel 587.

<sup>114</sup> Douglas MacArthur to John Curtin, 22 February 1943, MacArthur Archives, RG 4, Reel 587.

explained the soldiers who had debarked at Melbourne only unloaded personal effects and secret organizational equipment, which was normal procedure. The general did not intend to change the *modus operandi* at Australia's ports.<sup>115</sup> Similar to other aspects of the American – Australian relationship, MacArthur had one eye on the Australian domestic scene and believed that maintaining good wartime relations was important to the war effort. Antagonizing Australian unions could only slow down work further and force the employment of American personnel that otherwise could be used elsewhere. MacArthur wanted to mollify dockside workers, which was quite a contrast to the wishes of junior and middle ranking officers in Queensland.

North Queensland and Melbourne were not the only places where the assertiveness of Australia's dockside workers and the practices and outlook of US forces collided. On 3 April 1944, Brigadier General Thomas E. Rilea wrote to General Frink complaining about the workers at the Sydney waterside. Rilea, who was the commanding general of Base Section Seven, informed Frink he had "just come from an inspection of the waterside and am thoroughly angry and disgusted."<sup>116</sup> According to the general, civilian stevedores were loading and unloading ships at a snail's pace and refused to work in drizzle. Incredulous with what he saw as worker indolence, Rilea reported that no amount of cajoling or appeals to patriotism could rouse the stevedores from their alleged languor. What is unclear about this incident, and similar ones in Townsville, was just how much rain was falling and how much rain fall comprised a

---

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Thomas E. Rilea to Major General James L. Frink, 03 April 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 1, Box 1, File: Frink Book 3.

safety risk. For the Americans at the docks, the rain was a trivial matter. According to the general even “calling attention to the fact that men are working, fighting and dying in the rain and mud up north, has proven ineffective.”<sup>117</sup> Rilea mentioned that W.J. McNeil, the Premier of New South Wales, sympathized with the Americans, but doubted union officials would do anything to improve the situation. Rilea assured Frink that his base section would move supplies as needed through the heavy use of American GIs.<sup>118</sup>

Rilea was not the only American official complaining about Sydney’s stevedores. Charles E. Brown, the director of the War Shipping Administration (WSA) in Sydney,<sup>119</sup> lodged a protest with Sir Thomas Gordon in an April 1944 letter. Sir Thomas, who was the director of the Commonwealth’s Department of Supply and Shipping, bore the brunt of Brown’s anger, for the American complained that, despite Gordon’s assurances he would increase dockworker discipline and quality of work, stevedores still flouted the terms of the industrial award, refused to carry out orders, and did as they pleased. Because of this lack of co-operation, and the need to load and unload ships bound for the US as quickly as possible, Brown threatened he would use American troops at the port.<sup>120</sup> Echoing the protests of the US army in North Queensland, Brown complained that the WSA received no co-operation from the Stevedoring Industry Commission or the Commonwealth government in enforcing worker discipline. Ultimately, Brown believed that it was unfortunate that “at a time like this that any man can be so lacking in

---

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> The War Shipping Administration, created in 1942, was an American government agency responsible for purchasing and administering civilian shipping for military purposes.

<sup>120</sup> Charles E. Brown to Sir Thomas Gordon, 16 April 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 44, Box 154, File: Cross Reference 014.13.



patriotism and duty to his country that he deliberately sets out to interfere with the War effort, and that is just exactly what the defiance of the waterside workers in refusing to live up to the Award and carry out the orders given them amounts to.”<sup>121</sup> In an effort to curry support from US military authorities, Brown sent copies of his letter to several senior US officers, undoubtedly hoping they would apply pressure on the Australians.<sup>122</sup>

Brown and Rilea’s avowals to use GIs were realized because three weeks later MacArthur wrote F.M. Forde (the acting Prime Minister while Curtin was abroad) about the situation at Sydney Harbour. MacArthur was worried about the slow work at the harbour and characterized the situation as “extremely serious.”<sup>123</sup> Because he did not wish to antagonize the Commonwealth government or further strain relations, the general made no mention of union inefficiency or lack of discipline. Instead, he told Forde that “available workers are unable to meet United States Army requirements for handling essential military cargo.”<sup>124</sup> Because of this deficiency, MacArthur stated army engineers were forced to work at the waterside even though they were needed in the combat zone. The general’s missive had none of the veiled threats or harsh criticism evident in Brown’s letter to Sir Thomas. Indeed, at first blush, one might think MacArthur was discussing a wholly different situation at the waterside and that the problems were simply a lack of manpower. However, near the end of the letter, he hinted at the real reason for the slow work at the docks: “[i]t is to the interest of all concerned that civilian labor be used to *the maximum extent possible* and the highly trained military personnel employed on military

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> MacArthur to F.M. Forde, 09 May 1944, MacArthur Archive, RG-4, Reel 588.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

projects for which civilians cannot be used.”<sup>125</sup> This was an allusion to the poor work and lack of discipline of the WWF. MacArthur also mentioned, albeit subtly, Brown’s initial protest because the general remarked that Sir Thomas was requesting an extra one thousand labourers from the Commonwealth government.<sup>126</sup> Brown’s protest and use of American soldiers had the desired effect on Sir Thomas. Two days later, Forde wrote back to MacArthur and assured him the thousand workers would be forthcoming as soon as possible.<sup>127</sup>

Despite MacArthur’s efforts to improve the situation in Sydney, labour problems continued. At the end of May 1944, General R.J. Marshall received a report about delays at the harbour. The report cited the WWF’s refusal to work as the chief cause for slowdowns and provided a catalogue of incidents dating back to December 1943. For instance, a group of stevedores refused to return to work over the placement of their lunchboxes in December 1943; after finishing their lunches, the men were ordered to leave their boxes on the dock and return to work. They refused the order until a union delegate arrived. A couple of weeks later, workers again stopped work, only this time to discuss whether a group of returned soldiers should be allowed to join the union. In January 1944, a waterside worker was caught stealing cigarettes from an American transport ship; upset because the thief was caught out, his fellow workers protested his arrest and refused to work. They also claimed the Americans at the port threatened them all with firearms. Finally, the report described incidents where stevedores stopped work

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> F.M. Forde to General MacArthur, 11 May 1944, MacArthur Archives, RG-4, Reel 588.

because US authorities placed MPs in ship holds to stop stealing and to protect non-union labourers when they handled cargo.<sup>128</sup>

Problems between the WWF and the US military in Sydney went unresolved. Military action in the SWPA helps explain this. By May 1944, the war in the SWPA was moving beyond Australia. Allied forces were reducing the last Japanese positions on the northwest coast of New Guinea and most of the island was under Allied control by August. New Guinea became the jumping off point for the invasion of the Philippines; its importance as a supply base increased and Australia's ebbed.<sup>129</sup> The number of US troops in Sydney during this period reflected this shift. From nearly seven thousand troops in Sydney in June 1944, only thirty-seven hundred were left three months later. By the end of the year, there were just over two thousand GIs stationed in Sydney.

The advance of the war reduced labour tensions. For almost two years, the American military officers in charge of unloading supplies encountered union officials and labour practices that baffled and annoyed them. Local encounters and provocative actions by each party did not remain isolated events, but like problems evident in other fields of tension considered in this study, labour disputes made their way up the chain of command. MacArthur had decided that spending time and resources to educate Americans servicemen about Australia detracted from the war effort; instead he wisely followed a course of not acting or speaking in ways that undermined Prime Minister Curtin or antagonized Australian workers.

---

<sup>128</sup> J.L. Holman to Major General R.J. Marshal, 25 May 1944, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 0154, File: 014.13; "Report of Waterside Labor Delays," NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 0154, File: 014.13.

<sup>129</sup> Dan van der Vat, *The Pacific Campaign, World War II, The U.S – Japanese War 1941-1945* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), 312-15.

## **Mutinies and Other Confrontations with Unions**

The WWF was not the only Australian union that came into conflict with the US authorities. In December 1942, seventeen Chinese sailors of the USAT *General Verspyck* mutinied at Townsville. The crew refused to prepare the ship to sail on three occasions, which resulted in their confinement by US authorities on December 15. The ship was of Dutch origin, had been chartered by Britain's war ministry, and then assigned to the US army. Its crew came under US military authority. Although the crew was not Australian, the secretary of the Australian Seamen's Union (ASU) in Townsville took up its cause and approached the US staff judge advocate in Townsville. The secretary claimed that the detainment was unjust, for the union did not "recognise the authority of the U.S. Army to apprehend, detain, or try the seamen."<sup>130</sup> The secretary also threatened that his union would make a public scandal if the sailors were tried by court martial and demanded that the Chinese be signed on to another ship. Finally, the secretary warned that "unionism in Australia would not stand for the U.S. Army assuming jurisdiction over the Chinamen because of their union membership."<sup>131</sup>

General R.J. Marshall learned of the mutiny and confrontation with the Seamen's Union and reported the incident to MacArthur. Marshall cited a War Department letter that gave the military authorities the right to try merchant seamen by military tribunal even outside the territory of the United States. According to letter, US military

---

<sup>130</sup> "Mutinous Chinese Seamen U.S.A.T. 'General Verspyck'," NARA II (College Park), 15 January 1943, RG 495, Entry 45, Box 147, File: 0.51 Cross Reference; R.J. Marshall to Commander-in-Chief Southwest Pacific Area, 22 January 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 147, File: 0.51 Cross Reference.

<sup>131</sup> "Mutinous Chinese Seamen U.S.A.T. 'General Verspyck'," NARA II (College Park), 15 January 1943, RG 495, Entry 45, Box 147, File: 0.51 Cross Reference.

jurisdiction existed “with respect to the crews of merchant vessels, American or foreign, which are within a base or military area, or are carrying cargo...in connection with the military or naval operations of the United States in the war.”<sup>132</sup> Marshall also noted a 1942 US Supreme Court decision which ruled that “persistent and deliberate refusal by [civilian] seamen to perform their duties in making their ship ready for departure from port amounted to a “revolt or mutiny”” under the laws of the United States.<sup>133</sup> Finally, the general cited a series of precedents that justified American jurisdiction over the mutinous Chinese: during the First World War the civilian employees of a French contractor were deemed American employees because they were paid by the US government; an American employee on a base leased from Great Britain was held subject to military law in 1942 when he quit his job and left a box of dynamite unattended; and the personnel of the American Red Cross were subject to military law when they accompanied armies outside the United States.”<sup>134</sup> Because of these precedents, Marshall recommended that the US authorities court-martial the sailors for mutiny. Marshall warned, however, that because the mutiny happened in Townsville, rather than a zone of active operations, the Australian government might frown upon such steps.<sup>135</sup>

Characteristically and shrewdly, MacArthur did not take Marshall’s advice because he wrote to Prime Minister Curtin a few days later and suggested that Australian

---

<sup>132</sup> R.J. Marshall to Commander-in-Chief Southwest Pacific Area, 22 January 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 147, File: 0.51 Cross Reference.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> R.J. Marshall to Commander-in-Chief Southwest Pacific Area, 22 January 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 147, File: 0.51 Cross Reference; “Comments Re Jurisdiction of Military Courts,” 22 January 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 147, File: 0.51 Cross Reference.

civil courts deal with the sailors. The commander-in-chief feared that a court martial might cause the Prime Minister some embarrassment and believed that civil courts should take the case since the mutiny took place in Townsville rather than at sea. MacArthur envisioned the repercussions to American relations with Australian labour if he court-martialled the Chinese. He also considered the problems a court martial might create for Curtin, considering how integral union support was to his government. The Australian Workers' Union (AWU), the country's biggest union, dominated the Labor Party in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and at the federal level.<sup>136</sup> He might have even been aware of Curtin's acrimonious relationship with the Seamen's Union in the past. In 1924, the union had put a "black ban" on Curtin, when he supported government measures to use police against striking seamen.<sup>137</sup>

Upon handing jurisdiction over to the Australians, MacArthur considered the *General Verspyck* affair closed. The next month a similar incident occurred in Townsville. Fourteen members of the USAT *Empire Hamble* mutinied. These Chinese sailors would not accept their wages and refused further work because of certain grievances. American officials contacted local police, who took no action against the Chinese, so the ship's captain called in American MPs. With the MPs present, the captain ordered the sailors back to work and when they again refused the MPs arrested them. After an interrogation and some time in the American stockade, the sailors again rejected

---

<sup>136</sup> McMullen, *The Light on the Hill*, 186-87, 190-91.

<sup>137</sup> MacArthur to Curtin, 25 January 1943, MacArthur Archives, RG 4, Reel 587; David Day, *John Curtin: A Life* (Sydney: Harper Perennial, 2006), 321.

the order to return to work and so were charged with mutiny.<sup>138</sup> A few days after the incident, the captain of the *Hamble* informed the American authorities in Townsville that he was dropping the charges against his crew. The captain told the Americans that the ASU had pressured him to drop the charges by refusing to send a new crew onto his ship. The Americans also learned that the union had told the captain “he would have to pay the...seamen [and] if such payment was not forthcoming another crew would not be sent on board his ship.”<sup>139</sup>

After this mutiny, MacArthur wrote Curtin and outlined the situation in Townsville. Judging from the tone of his letter, this second mutiny and the behaviour of the ASU infuriated the general. In MacArthur’s view, the union was obstructing the war effort and he even accused it of being a fifth column in Townsville. To halt union obstruction, MacArthur threatened to try the men by court martial if the prime minister did not rectify the problem himself:

It is requested that the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia take immediate steps to correct this situation. Unless it can be corrected through normal channels it will be necessary to reverse my previous action and insist that cases of this nature be handled by the Commander-in-Chief through military tribunals.<sup>140</sup>

In response to this threat, Curtin promised to take a hard line against the mutineers and the Seamen’s Union in Townsville. Nevertheless, MacArthur came close to making good

---

<sup>138</sup> L.S. Ostrander to Commander-in-Chief Southwest Pacific Area, 09 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 147, File: 0.51 Cross Reference.

<sup>139</sup> L.S. Ostrander to Commander-in-Chief Southwest Pacific Area, 09 February 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 147, File: 0.51 Cross Reference.

<sup>140</sup> “Mutiny of Chinese Seamen, *SS Empire Hamble*,” 13 February 1943, MacArthur Archives, RG 4, Reel 587.

his threat, as he very nearly decided to take over jurisdiction despite Curtin's assurances.<sup>141</sup>

What pushed MacArthur to the brink of drastic action, which would have damaged his relationship with Curtin and antagonized Australian unions? The general learned that despite his pledge to take "stern action" against the mutineers, Curtin reneged on his promise and the Chinese were released without punishment. This angered MacArthur because he feared, with some justification, that the discipline of other crews would be impossible to maintain if the Chinese were not punished. He drafted a letter to Curtin expressing these concerns and asserted that

[t]he release of seamen accused of mutiny, without trial or punishment, especially in time of war, is so foreign to the customs of the United States and of the United States Army that a repetition of such action must be avoided. Accordingly, I have no choice but to insist upon retaining custody of all mutinous seamen who come properly within our military jurisdiction and dealing with them through military tribunals.<sup>142</sup>

Fortunately for wartime relations, MacArthur chose not to send his letter and allowed Curtin to deal with future mutinies. Curtin resolved the problems in Townsville to the general's satisfaction because when another crew mutinied in May 1943, MacArthur instructed US army authorities to hand the mutineers over to the local authorities.<sup>143</sup>

The US military also experienced some fraught relations with members of the Australian Workers Union (AWU) soon after the arrival of American forces. Problems began when, on 15 July 1942, two functionaries of the AWU attempted to enter the Williamtown aerodrome near Newcastle, New South Wales. The Americans had taken

---

<sup>141</sup> Douglas MacArthur to Prime Minister, 10 March 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 147, File: 0.51 Cross Reference.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> MacArthur to Curtin, 28 May 1943, MacArthur Archives, RG 4, Reel 587 .



over the aerodrome and union delegates wanted to enter the area because there were still unionized labourers working within. Even though one of the delegates had a pass permitting entry to the aerodrome, American guards still denied him access. The AWU complained to the Minister for Air, which induced J. McCauley, a group captain with the RAAF, to contact the headquarters of the USASOS. McCauley pointed out in his letter that under the provisions of several industrial awards, union delegates had the right to enter locations to interview union representatives or labourers. Significantly, the air captain added that the RAAF allowed union delegates to enter its facilities, provided delegates were not members of subversive organizations. McCauley concluded his letter with a request to know what US policy was going to be with respect to granting union representatives access to military locations.<sup>144</sup>

The incident was brought to the attention of General R.J. Marshall who reported the incident to MacArthur in September 1942. Although he acknowledged that union delegates were allowed to visit RAAF installations under certain conditions, Marshall believed “authorized union officials should meet the members of their organizations after working hours and off the reservation.”<sup>145</sup> To justify his position, Marshall intimated that to let union officials into American installations would hinder the war effort, and set a dangerous precedent. After all, the general pointed out it was not the policy of the US Army to allow labour representatives to come on military reservations and “take up the time of employees or slow up work that is being paid by the United States

---

<sup>144</sup> J. McCauley to Headquarters USASOS, 20 August 1942, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 18, Box 976, File: 085.

<sup>145</sup> R.J. Marshall to Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, 01 September 1942, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 11, Box 14, File: Trade and Labor Unions, 4.

Government.”<sup>146</sup> A change in this policy represented the thin wedge that would open the door to other civilian agencies demanding entry into US military installations “for the purposes of social welfare, investigation of social conditions, [and] investigations of rates of pay for American soldiers as compared with Australians.”<sup>147</sup> Marshall believed the US army employed civilians to advance the war effort. Union functionaries did not belong on American installations because they would have a disruptive effect that could only hinder winning the war.

Interestingly, MacArthur had his adjutant general write to the RAAF captain at the end of September; he ignored Marshall’s advice because Captain McCauley learned that “[i]t is the desire of the Commander-in-Chief that the U.S. Army follow the practice of the Australian military authorities in permitting officials of Industrial unions to enter a place where work is being carried out under an industrial award.”<sup>148</sup> A few weeks later, all American air force units in Australia were ordered to allow union officials access to any area where labourers were working under an industrial award.<sup>149</sup> Rather than antagonize union officials and damage wartime relations, MacArthur chose to accept the policy adopted by the RAAF.

American authorities had other, more serious problems with the AWU. Troubles of a seemingly trivial nature began in summer of 1942, when Townsville’s US quartermaster laundry changed its hours for civilian employees from a 44 to a 48 hour per

---

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> L.S. Ostrander to Deputy Chief of Air Staff, 29 September 1942, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 18, Box 976, File: 085.

<sup>149</sup> Donald Wilson to All U.S. Air Force Units, 12 October 1942, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 18, Box 976, File: 085.

week. Several of the civilians employed on the laundry's nightshift complained of the change because it meant arriving home later. In retaliation, some civilian workers, who were members of the AWU, conducted minor acts of sabotage: laundry was lost, torn, and purposely stained with indelible ink. Because these disruptions did not cause the Americans to return to a 44-hour week, six laundresses tried to convince their co-workers to strike. The American military in Townsville refused to tolerate this agitation because it "seriously interfered with the operation of the laundry and limited its hours of operation."<sup>150</sup> Rather than bow to the demands of the agitators, the US army summarily fired the six women in September. The sackings had the desired effect for the Americans because there were no further labour problems at the laundry.<sup>151</sup>

The dismissals nipped labour agitation in the bud, but they had the unintended consequence of drawing Queensland's Industrial Court into the fray. The women complained about their dismissal, and subsequently, US Colonel Harry C. Cullins, the base section quartermaster, found himself subpoenaed before an industrial magistrate to answer for his actions. The sackings concerned the magistrate because they were apparently in breach of an industrial award; the US army, as employer, was required to give one week's notice before firing anyone. After meeting with the magistrate, Cullins tried to get advice from the base section's JAG officer; however, he was away in

---

<sup>150</sup> William T. Powers, "Memorandum Relative to Quartermaster Laundry: Civilian Employees, Townville," 25 January 1943, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 291, File: 333; William M. Bick, "Statement Mr. M. Bick, Civilian Superintendent, Townsville Laundry," NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 291, File: 333.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

Mareeba. As a result, Cullins acted on his own initiative, consented to the magistrate's interpretation of the award, and rehired the six women.<sup>152</sup>

The laundresses' victory was short lived. After a week of work, Cullins fired the women again, this time believing he had honoured the requirements of the industrial award. In early October, the AWU took up the workers' cause again and the civilian manager of the laundry was ordered to appear before the magistrate to answer charges of victimization. At the hearing, American representatives also attended, and refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the magistrate. The base section's JAG officer, Major William T. Powers, echoing the attitudes of many of his countrymen, told the magistrate that "all civilian staff hired by the United States Army work under the rules, regulations and the standing orders of the United States Army and the U.S. Government was not subject to the jurisdiction of any foreign power."<sup>153</sup> He added the US army "would not permit the Union to compel us to employ civilians who interfered with the operation of the laundry and causing [sic] dissatisfaction generally amongst the employees."<sup>154</sup> Realizing he had behaved less than diplomatically before the magistrate, Powers added that the wages and hours of work that their employees enjoyed at the laundry were within union limits.<sup>155</sup> Like the jurisdictional and policing disputes discussed in chapter one, some American personnel believed that Australian laws and customs did not apply to the US forces and they could ignore them with impunity.

---

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> William M. Bick, "Statement Mr. M. Bick, Civilian Superintendent, Townsville Laundry," [no date] NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 291, File: 333.

<sup>154</sup> William T. Powers, "Memorandum Relative to Quartermaster Laundry: Civilian Employees, Townsville," 25 January 1943, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 291, File: 333.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

The magistrate clearly did not know how to react to the Americans' challenge to his authority because, according to the laundry superintendent who attended the conference, he did not make any ruling and left the dispute in abeyance. The northern district secretary of the AWU, Tom Doherty, was furious with the Americans' unwillingness to submit to union demands and ominously vowed that he would create as much trouble as he could and hold up work at the laundry.<sup>156</sup> Doherty's threat to disrupt the laundry proved empty. The base section's laundry officer reported in January 1943 that there had been no further disputes and that the morale of the civilian labour was excellent.<sup>157</sup> Nonetheless, Doherty made good his boast to create as much trouble as he could.

The dispute languished for months and it likely would have faded from memory but for the agitation of Doherty and the general secretary of the AWU, Clarence Fallon. On January 14, Fallon announced at a delegate meeting of the AWU that he was finished with the Curtin government. The dispute in Townsville had raised Fallon's ire and he accused Curtin of failing to support the AWU in its struggle with the US army. Sydney's *Daily Mirror* reported the tirade, and included Fallon's erroneous claims that the American forces had applied military rule to the workers in Townsville and that the industrial magistrate had ruled in favour of the sacked workers.<sup>158</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> William T. Powers, "Memorandum Relative to Quartermaster Laundry: Civilian Employees, Townville," 25 January 1943, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 291, File: 333; William M. Bick, "Statement Mr. M. Bick, Civilian Superintendent, Townsville Laundry," NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 291, File: 333.

<sup>157</sup> Allen L. Morrison, "Statement by Laundry Officer, Quartermaster Laundry, Base Section No.2, APO 922, concerning Union difficulties in the Quartermaster Laundry," NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 291, File: 333.

<sup>158</sup> *Daily Mirror* (Sydney), 14 January 1943.

The AWU did not stop with its open condemnation of the employment practices of the American forces in Townsville. The AWU lobbied the Prime Minister on behalf of the laundresses behind the scenes. Fallon and other AWU representatives met with Curtin on February 25 and pressured him to take up the issue with MacArthur. Fallon had deep roots within the Australian Labor Party; he had been the president of both the Queensland branch of the ALP and the party's federal wing. Although he and Curtin had once been allies within the party, Fallon remarked in 1941 that a Labor government under Curtin would be a calamity for the country. Fallon now applied sufficient pressure on Curtin for the Prime Minister to contact MacArthur. We do not have Curtin's letter, but MacArthur's response a week later indicates the Prime Minister was unhappy with the termination of the women's employment and claims that the US Army was ignoring Australian labour practices.<sup>159</sup>

In his reply to Curtin, MacArthur, conciliatory as always, agreed that "American authorities should comply if possible with the standards of employment prevalent in Australia under its laws and customs."<sup>160</sup> MacArthur believed that generally every effort had been made to achieve this goal, however with such a "far flung command an abuse may occur but when such happens it will be promptly corrected if brought to my attention."<sup>161</sup> The general vowed to investigate the firings in Townsville and dismissed Secretary Fallon's assertion that the workers were subject to American law. He concluded that "[e]very endeavour will be made to prevent the development of situations

---

<sup>159</sup> John Curtin to C.G. Fallon, 20 March 1943, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5; Douglas MacArthur to John Curtin, 07 March 1943, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5; McMullen, *The Light on the Hill*, 191, 203, 209.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

such as the one you describe, which could cause any disturbance in the established rights and privileges of Australian workers.”<sup>162</sup>

In an effort to placate the AWU, Curtin relayed the substance of MacArthur’s letter to Fallon, who then sent copies out to all his district secretaries. Interestingly, a copy of Curtin’s letter, by accident or design, found its way into the hands of American military authorities in Townsville. Colonel Brown wrote to General Marshall’s chief of staff about the letters and wondered if MacArthur’s commitment to following Australian employment practices meant that there was a change in policy. He asked to be kept abreast on policy because it was vital to relations in the area. General Clyde Alexander responded to Brown’s letter and indicated that he would pass on his request to Marshall. Alexander added that he had no knowledge that a change in policy had occurred but would keep the colonel abreast with any changes.<sup>163</sup> Maddeningly, this is the last we hear of the problems in Townsville. Were the laundresses quietly rehired? Were the American authorities in Base Section Two admonished off the record for firing the women in the first place? Did MacArthur simply wish to placate Curtin by telling him what he wanted to hear? After all, the general had more important things to deal with.

---

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> John Curtin to C.G. Fallon, 20 March 1943, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5; T. Dougherty, “Circular to the District Secretaries,” 24 March 1943, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5; Homer C. Brown to Brigadier General C.C. Alexander, 28 March 1943, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5; C.C. Alexander to Colonel Homer C. Brown, 31 March 1943, NARA (College Park), RG495, Entry 45, Box 296, File: 333.5.

## Tension in the Press

So far, the discussion has shown several instances of conflict between Australian workers and American authorities. The unwillingness of Australian labour to put its union privileges aside to win the war was met with American dismay and bafflement. Interestingly, it was not just Americans who worked alongside union labour that complained of their conduct; some common soldiers shared this view as well. It is impossible to determine how many Americans thought the Australian unions behaved in a petty and subversive way, but there is some evidence of widespread dismay. For example, the conservative *Courier Mail* published a letter written by an anonymous American soldier who railed against what he saw as union selfishness and unwillingness to give up their privileges. The letter, published in May 1942, is rich with sarcasm, sums up American frustration with Australian labour, and exaggerates the impact of labour agitation during the war:

As an American soldier who is glad to do what little he can to help in the task of ridding the world of its Hitlers and Tojos, I wish to congratulate you on your courageous and patriotic stand in the matter of the bus that takes you to work. It certainly is horrible to think that you have to walk 400 yard from where that bus stops to where you work. You have to stand together with all other union men in Australia, too. I have in mind the 400 men who threatened to strike unless provided with shelter in which to wait to be paid. And all the other vital reasons for striking, of which I have read since I arrived in Australia.<sup>164</sup>

Not content to point out what he saw as union pettiness, the GI also juxtaposed the conditions of Australian workers with those of men fighting in the SWPA:

Of course, your sons and brothers and cousins are dying in battlefields all over the world. But what of that? Is it half so important that they walk weary mile after

---

<sup>164</sup> *Courier Mail*, 09 May 1942.



weary mile, go without proper food, proper shelter, and adequate arms and ammunition, as that you should give in an inch to 'Capital?' Of course not... They don't have any airplanes to protect them from above. Why? Because you quit mining coal and the steel factories had to quite making steel and the airplane factories had to stop making airplanes... I know that your sons, sweating and toiling through the deserts of Africa, fighting mosquitoes, jungle disease, and Japanese in Malaya, Java, and New Guinea, are proud of your unbending determination. They must think it entirely out of reason for your employers, or your country, to expect you to work any extra hours, or under any less than pleasant circumstances, just because there is a war to fight.<sup>165</sup>

The writer concluded his letter criticizing what he believed was labour's willingness to miss the forest for trees. If the war was lost:

by lack of proper co-operation from those of you who cannot carry guns along with us, then I am afraid that your glorious stand against all assaults on your privileges as "labourers" will not avail you much. When little yellow men swagger down your streets, insult your women, kill you or force you to work without pay in order to carry conquest into other parts of the world, all you will have for consolation is the memory of your strikes and work stoppages. You will probably be content to see your homes and loved ones ravaged by barbarians, so long as you remember the days when you placed personal or class privileges above the necessities of country. Gentlemen, your beloved Australia and your King, and your friends from America applaud you."<sup>166</sup>

This transparent propaganda was not a realistic assessment of the impact of labour action on the war effort, but it likely encapsulated the impression of many American junior officers who supervised operations that employed Australians. Furthermore, the letter probably reflected the sentiments of common soldiers and sailors who had spent enough time in Australia to witness its labour unions in action. What they saw as union

---

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> *Courier Mail*, 09 May 1942.

pettiness, the workers themselves saw as a continuation of a struggle for rights that began in the 1840s.<sup>167</sup>

A similar letter written by another anonymous US soldier found its way into the pages of the *Courier Mail* eight months later titled “Let’s Win this War Then Take Holidays.” Less combative and sarcastic than the letter above, this letter nevertheless is significant for the author claimed he expressed the feelings of hundreds of other GIs. What raised the soldier’s ire in particular was the demand made by certain labourers for a five-day holiday during Easter. The soldier maintained he was heartbroken at such a demand as he had not had even a weekend pass in over a year. Once again, American incredulousness crept into the letter, as the soldier could not believe while men were fighting and dying thousands of miles away from home “industrial workers would lie on the beaches and go to the races with not a care in the world.”<sup>168</sup> The soldier concluded his letter with a challenge, “[i]ndustrial workers, I appeal to you to take inventory of yourselves. Are you satisfied to have Saturday afternoon and Sundays off and then ask for a holiday every six weeks, while some poor soul gives his very life every minute?”<sup>169</sup>

One final letter, printed in June 1943, featured a US private’s complaints about a number of union strikes in Queensland. Published in the *Courier Mail*, the private did not wholly blame the unions for their actions, but instead blamed the Commonwealth government for passing laws that gave unions too much power over the economy. According to the private, such laws might have been useful in the past, but now they were

---

<sup>167</sup> Evans, *A History of Queensland*, 2007.

<sup>168</sup> *Courier Mail*, 18 January 1943.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

only hurting the war effort.<sup>170</sup> Interestingly, the letter prompted a response from a disgruntled unionist, who maintained that the unions were doing their part to win the war and questioned the private if he thought strikes in America hurt the war effort as well.<sup>171</sup>

Letters from angry GIs were not the only examples of American dissatisfaction that found their way into print. American columnist James Westbrook Pegler also complained of union unwillingness to forego rights to win the war. Writing in June 1943, Pegler commented on the WWF's unwillingness to work in rainy weather, "[t]hat longshoremen in a country so close under Japanese guns should refuse to unload a military cargo because of rain is almost incredible, but true."<sup>172</sup> The American writer also noted the loss of work due to constant cigarette breaks and the union's unwillingness to tolerate GIs working as stevedores. Pegler remarked that the WWF, in two cases, made an exception to Americans working as dockworkers however. Specifically, the union allowed some GIs to gain stevedoring experience before they travelled to battle zones to the north. The columnist sardonically observed "Australians kindly let American soldiers practice on docks and learn how to handle cargo in a fighting zone, where longshoremen won't go."<sup>173</sup> Significantly, Pegler's article was picked up in Australia and printed in Brisbane's *Sunday Mail*. Hundreds if not thousands of Americans learned of labour-management conflict; they read how Australian unions pressed for rights even in wartime. Labourers meanwhile learned that some Americans held their fight for better conditions in contempt. There was a conflict of goals within

---

<sup>170</sup> *Courier Mail*, 08 June 1943.

<sup>171</sup> *Courier Mail*, 11 June 1943.

<sup>172</sup> *Sunday Mail*, 06 June 1943.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

these two groups. For Americans soldiers – or at least their officers – winning the war took precedent over everything and justified any manner of sacrifice. Australian workers on the other hand saw their conditions as a continuation of a struggle for rights that began a hundred years before. The war did not mean sacrificing gains that had been won in the past.

## **Conclusion**

Despite providing thousands of jobs for Australian workers, the US military's role as employer nevertheless fomented tension. American authorities, understandably concerned about security, angered many Australian applicants over inconsistent hiring practices and inappropriate questions. Some applicants refused to co-operate with the Americans, much to the latter's dissatisfaction. In reaction to Australian complaints and resistance, senior American officers instructed their subordinates to hire applicants of poor character in order to foster good relations and because the wartime labour pool was so shallow.

Working for the Americans created more problems. US authorities had particularly poor relations with some of Australia's unions. Conflict with the WWF was never resolved during the war and subsided only when the Americans no longer needed Australia as an entrepôt. The Americans, with some justification, but also as outsiders unaware of Australian history and labour militancy, could not understand union intransigence, apparent lack of work ethic, and unwillingness to honour industrial awards. Frustration was so great in North Queensland that Americans wanted to eliminate dealing

with the WWF altogether and take over Townsville's docks. Despite the WWF's lack of co-operation, we again see glimpses of American reluctance to abide by Australian rules and customs. In particular, the sackings of laundry workers in Townsville and the JAG officer's declaration that American forces did not have to abide Australian law points to undercurrents of arrogance and indifference to Australian culture. Doubtless, any contact between allies was going to foster tensions. What is remarkable in the case of America's occupation of Australia is how much of both countries' history of labour relations played out on the docks. Having stepped into the role of an Australian boss – as one of Australia's largest employers or employer of contractors – the American military brought with it ideas about specialization, assignment of men by ability, anti-communism, and labour spying. Australian unions persisted in fighting old battles with their new boss despite the war. That meant accepting, if not defending, pilfering. It certainly meant defending egalitarianism, avoidance of hazard and discomfort, and working to live not living to work. The boss and the worker, the Yank and the Aussie, did not understand each other's history, work practices, and work attitudes. At the political centre, MacArthur and Curtin made soothing declarations and hoped any trouble would blow over without a major strike.

## CHAPTER FOUR –WHITE AUSTRALIA ENCOUNTERS BLACK AMERICA: RACE RELATIONS

The Commonwealth government did not want African Americans in Australia. It was overjoyed to receive US assistance in the struggle against Japan, but the thought of blacks being a part of the American presence was resisted. John Hammond Moore notes that “as the Japanese were rounding up defeated Australian soldiers in Singapore and bombs were exploding in Darwin and Broome, Canberra registered a firm protest [against black GIs] with Washington, one of many received by harassed officials.”<sup>1</sup> Canberra at first refused to accept black GIs and only changed its mind under intense American pressure and assurances (which proved only partially true) that blacks would be stationed in remote areas away from urban centres.<sup>2</sup> The Americans also pledged that the African American contingent would be limited in number and leave immediately after the war.<sup>3</sup>

Why did the Americans ignore Australian protests over the inclusion of African American troops? Ultimately, the need for manpower in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) and the Allies decision that defeating Germany had priority over the war with Japan meant that the Americans needed every man, black or white.<sup>4</sup> MacArthur said as much in March 1942. Just before he took command of Allied troops in Australia, his

---

<sup>1</sup> John Hammond Moore, *Over-sexed, over-paid, and over here: Americans in Australia, 1941-1945* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1981), 209.

<sup>2</sup> E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under: The American Impact on Australia* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Ulysses Lee, *United States Army in World War II, Special Studies: The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1966), 429.

<sup>4</sup> Darryl McIntyre, “Paragons of Glamour: A Study of U.S. Military Forces in Australia” (PhD dissertation., University of Queensland, 1989), 461; Douglas MacArthur, *Reminiscences* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1964), 156-57.

predecessor General George Brett requested that blacks be removed from the country because of their frequent clashes with white GIs.<sup>5</sup> When asked for his opinion on the subject, MacArthur cabled Washington and argued that the lack of manpower required the presence of black troops. He did not think that racial clashes between GIs or potential problems with Australians would be much of a problem if he stationed blacks in “the front zones away from great centres of population.”<sup>6</sup> In the general’s view, this policy would not only limit interracial violence, but also placate Australian authorities who were uneasy about the presence of African Americans in the country. It is worth mentioning that in response to similar resistance to the presence of African American troops on British soil, Washington ignored objections from London and sent black troops anyway. General George C. Marshall, the army chief of staff, told the British ambassador that “politics (black pressure) and practicality (the need for service troops) left the Army no alternative” but to send African American troops to Britain.<sup>7</sup> These factors applied equally to the American forces in Australia; when it came to manpower, even more so.

The Americans fulfilled their pledge that black GIs would leave after the war; however, during the war the African American presence in Australia was neither small nor short-lived. Black soldiers were not entirely shipped out of sight and onto remote bases. By the summer of 1942 there were over seven thousand black soldiers stationed in Australia, or eight percent of the total US forces in the country. The vast majority of

---

<sup>5</sup> Cable 1045, Brett to AG, War Department, 25 March 1942, US National Archives (Suitland), RG407, War Department, AG 381, Section 1 “Far East Section,” quoted in McIntyre, *Paragons of Glamour*, 458.

<sup>6</sup> Cable NR 41, MacArthur to Marshall, 29 March 1942, NARA (Suitland), RG165, War Plans Division, War Department, Exec. 10 Item 7d., Messages from General MacArthur (December 1941-June 1942) quoted in McIntyre, *Paragons of Glamour*, 461.

<sup>7</sup> David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain 1942-1945* (London: Phoenix Press, 1996), 217.

these troops were stationed in Queensland, with 3,500 living in remote Mt. Isa and 2,000 on the outskirts of Brisbane. There were also smaller contingents based in Charter Towers, Townsville, and Cloncurry; Sydney was also a major furlough destination for black GIs.<sup>8</sup> Because black servicemen were almost entirely relegated to segregated supply and work battalions, their stay in Australia was often longer than many white combat battalions which were in transit to battle zones.<sup>9</sup> This allocation of duties was one reason why not all black battalions could be sent to remote areas because, in their capacity as service troops, they were needed in cities where there were large contingents of other American GIs.

The presence of black personnel created problems for US military authorities. GIs did not leave their racial antagonisms at home; interracial fights were a constant feature of the occupation wherever black and white Americans came into contact. In reaction to early eruptions of violence, American authorities segregated the two races as far as possible. Contrary to the position of some historians, this policy did not exacerbate racial antagonisms and increase violence but was a response to existing conflict. When segregation was enforced violence decreased. Interestingly, American authorities rejected suggestions made by Queensland authorities to increase segregation further and to strictly limit black GIs' access to Australian towns. One reason for this refusal was an American preoccupation with black morale. Indeed, the need for manpower and service troops in the SWPA meant that black morale was a concern for American authorities.

---

<sup>8</sup> Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 111; Raymond Evan, *A History of Queensland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 193.

<sup>9</sup> Kay Saunders, *War on the Home Front: State Intervention in Queensland 1938-1948* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989), 63.



Apprehension over low morale and the possibility of revolt, coupled with a fear of criticism from black leaders and white liberals back home, ultimately translated into US military authorities allowing African American servicemen a considerable amount of freedom while in Australia. This resulted in a great deal of interaction between black servicemen and Australian civilians. The management of race by American authorities in Australia was neither as strictly segregated as Australian governments would have liked nor as liberal as African American service personnel desired. The management of interracial contact occupied American time and effort. Americans at home were observing segregation policies, while Australians too kept a critical eye on American racial arrangements.

The black presence created problems for Australian authorities and exposed latent fears over race mixing and miscegenation. Australian leaders did not want African American troops because of the country's longstanding prohibition of non-white immigration. Except for Australia's statistically small Aboriginal population and a few thousand Asians and southern Europeans, Australia was overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic.<sup>10</sup> Politicians recoiled at the notion of introducing thousands of black military personnel even temporarily. They were also concerned over how the Australian population would receive African American troops. Despite the anxieties and resistance of Australian politicians, civilians for the most part welcomed African American troops and relations were generally good. However, there were still areas of friction. A minority of Australians hated the black presence and wanted these soldiers gone from their

---

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations 1788-1993* (St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 152.

communities. At the heart of this protest was the fear of miscegenation and interracial sex. Good conduct distinguished African American soldiers, but black GIs were not saints, and critical whites insisted on nothing short of saintly conduct. On a couple of occasions, black units ran amuck in Australian towns. This behaviour was a reflection of poor discipline caused by the military's segregationist policies and proclivity to saddle black units with misfit officers.

### **Black Against White and the Fear of Low Morale**

In several respects, the treatment of black soldiers during the Second World War mirrored American society.<sup>11</sup> Black servicemen were second-class citizens in the US military, segregated from whites, and largely placed in work battalions. They were usually commanded by white officers (many of them from the South) and subjected to racial discrimination and verbal abuse. In 1942, there were only 817 black officers in the whole army, which amounted to 0.35 percent of the total black army strength. It goes without saying that not one black officer commanded a white unit. War planners in Washington considered black troops a liability, as Army General Classification Tests (AGCT) placed around three-quarters of blacks in the bottom two categories of classification. These tests, which actually measured educational achievement and socially acquired skills rather than intelligence, reflected that most blacks came from

---

<sup>11</sup> For an assessment of the experiences of blacks in the US military during the Second World war, see Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," *Journal of American History* 58:3 (December 1971), 661-681; Steve Estes, *I am a Man: Race Manhood and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), esp. chap. 1.

impoverished and discriminatory southern states.<sup>12</sup> Like American society, the US military embraced a “separate but equal” policy that was impossible to implement and wasted military resources.<sup>13</sup>

Things were no different in Australia; discrimination, tension, and violence between black and white GIs were ubiquitous. In March 1942, there were a series of fights between black and white troops that reached riot proportions in Brisbane.<sup>14</sup> By September 1942, state police in the city were breaking up 20 fights a night.<sup>15</sup> Captain Hyman Samuelson of the 96<sup>th</sup> Engineers wrote in his diary that his men were not allowed to debark in Brisbane because “there had already been a lot of trouble with negro soldiers in that city.”<sup>16</sup> His men were later involved in a large brawl with whites in Townsville, which resulted in their banishment from the town. Even after leaving Australia, past problems with white troops hounded Samuelson and his men. He learned they could not return to Australia on furlough because whenever black units visited Australia on leave there was always trouble with white units.<sup>17</sup> After Samuelson broke the bad news to his men, he confessed in his diary that the main reason for trouble was the absence of coloured women in Australia, and the fact white GIs did not like to see black men with white women.<sup>18</sup> Intelligence officers made similar observations in 1942.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 83.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Kay Saunders, “In a Cloud of Lust: Black GIs and Sex in World War II” in Joy Damousi & Marylin Lake (eds.) *Gender and War: Australia at War in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 187.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Thompson and Robert Macklin, *The Battle of Brisbane: Australians and Yanks at War* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2000), 170.

<sup>16</sup> Gwendolyn Midlo Hall (ed.), *Love, War, and the 96<sup>th</sup> Engineers (Colored): The World War II Diaries of Captain Hyman Samuelson* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 42.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Violence between black and white soldiers during the first months of the occupation was one reason why American authorities initiated a policy of segregation between the two groups.<sup>20</sup> Many blacks were moved to North Queensland and those who remained in urban centres were segregated from white GIs. These decisions have prompted sharp criticism from historians who correctly see this as another example of discrimination against black GIs. Darryl McIntyre argues the segregation of black and white servicemen “not only hampered the full utilization of manpower, it also threatened the morale of those Negroes who served with the armed forces.”<sup>21</sup> Kay Saunders goes further and blames segregation for an increase in violence because both groups began to equate their assigned areas as their own territory.<sup>22</sup> Segregation was morally wrong, had adverse effects on black morale, and meant a duplication of services for whites and blacks, but the argument that separation increased violence is incorrect. Conflict between white and black GIs prompted US authorities to separate the two groups and this policy actually reduced conflict. Evidence from Queensland Police reports supports this contention.

In September 1942, Police Inspector T.M. Brannelly wrote to Queensland’s Commissioner of Police complaining of violence between white and black GIs in Goodna and Redbank, two towns close to Brisbane. Brannelly explained in his report that when American GIs first arrived there were frequent brawls between blacks and whites, which prompted the decision to bar whites from the two towns. Brannelly’s report intimates

---

<sup>19</sup> Peter A. Thompson and Robert Macklin, *The Battle of Brisbane: Australians and the Yanks at War* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2000), 103.

<sup>20</sup> Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 194.

<sup>21</sup> McIntyre, *Paragons of Glamour*, 497.

<sup>22</sup> Saunders, “In a Cloud of Lust,” 184.

that the decision to segregate the two groups limited the violence in the area and trouble only reoccurred when black troops left Redbank and whites started to visit the area again. According to the inspector “He [black GIs] insists on his right, and rebukes the white American for visiting territory, which, strictly speaking is out of bounds to him, which of course in most instances causes a brawl.”<sup>23</sup> To alleviate the violence, Brannelly recommended that US officials place Redbank out of bounds to black troops and enforce the already established segregation of whites and blacks.<sup>24</sup>

Two months later, a constable stationed in Goodna reported American MPs had been patrolling the area for several weeks and had successfully barred white GIs from the town. Because of the separation of troops, the constable observed that “[n]o further trouble has developed between the white and coloured American troops and the arrangements made have been satisfactory.”<sup>25</sup> The police reported a similar reduction of violence in Redbank between blacks and whites, though interestingly, US military officials ignored Brannelly’s suggestion to bar black troops from the area. Instead, they maintained the status quo and kept whites from the area.<sup>26</sup>

Segregation and policing worked to minimize interracial conflict in this part of Queensland until July 1943 when MPs became lax in enforcing segregation. Inspector Brannelly told Police Commissioner Cecil Carroll that American MPs were paying little attention to Goodna and that the area “has been declared open to black and white alike.”<sup>27</sup> The inspector speculated that the change in the status quo was due to a shortage of MPs

---

<sup>23</sup> T.M. Brannelly to Commissioner of Police, 15 September 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Constable 2745 to Inspector of Police, 12 November 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>26</sup> Sergeant Johnstone to Inspector of Police, 15 November 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>27</sup> Brannelly to the Commissioner, 26 July 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

“or perhaps some misunderstanding on the part of the operating personnel who change from time to time.”<sup>28</sup> Once again, the inspector recommended black GIs be banned from Redbank and asked the police commissioner to take this up with US authorities.

According to the inspector, “this should not inflict any serious hardship on them, as they would have from Wacol to Victoria Bridge [in Brisbane] in which to seek recreation.”<sup>29</sup>

Commissioner Carroll ignored his inspector’s recommendations because he was “loathe [sic] to suggest, particularly to the U.S. authorities, that the places referred to be placed out of bounds to coloured U.S. troops,” as this would sour the spirit of co-operation that existed.<sup>30</sup> In the final analysis, segregation did not increase violence between blacks and whites but contained it, and some segregation was achieved by banning white GIs from Queensland towns. As much as one would wish for harmony in a desegregated army, civil rights were not a reality in the United States during World War II and the racially and socially conservative armed forces were not about to advance them in wartime. Racial taunting provoked fistfights; the segregation of recreational areas was thus a reaction to interracial violence that existed before any efforts were made to separate the two groups. In places like South Brisbane, an area where the recreation of blacks was concentrated but where whites could venture, there were outbreaks of violence throughout the war.<sup>31</sup> Separating white and black GIs during the war was a reprehensible way of managing race relations, but when it was enforced it at least contained violence.

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Commissioner of Police to Private Secretary of the Premier, 30 July 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>31</sup> Detective Senior Sergeant H. Bischof to Criminal Investigation Branch, 09 August 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12040. See also Saunders, “Cloud of Lust,” 185.

Relations between white and black GIs were not the only ones marked by tension and violence; there were also examples of hostility between white officers and black personnel in Australia. James Baker, who was stationed in Australia as a member of the 91<sup>st</sup> Engineers, recalled that there were “some outfits where the black troops just hated the officers...I guess they had reason to. There was fear from each side and they just hated each other.”<sup>32</sup> Officers of the Provost Corps had particularly poor relations with black servicemen during the occupation largely because racism permeated the service and the officer class believed blacks needed to be kept “in their place.” This mentality, according to historian Harvard Sitkoff, pervaded the entire US army.<sup>33</sup> A letter from Colonel Jeremiah P. Holland to Captain Hubert J. Scallon, concerning the alleged gang rape of a white woman by five black GIs in Base Section Three, exposes a raw example of this mentality. Referring to the rape, Holland jokingly wondered about the behaviour of blacks in Brisbane, “what is the matter with these people up there, can’t you keep those niggers satisfied? I thought the situation that we provided for on my visit there took care of the necessary amenities of life for both white and black.”<sup>34</sup> The letter is rich with significance. Holland was the deputy provost marshal in Australia, which made him the second highest-ranking officer within the Provost Corps.<sup>35</sup> That he casually threw around racial epithets in a correspondence that went through official channels signifies he

---

<sup>32</sup> James Baker, *Black Soldier Blues*, produced by Mark Chapman and Veronica Fury, Brisbane, Big Island Productions, 2005, documentary.

<sup>33</sup> Harvard Sitkoff, “Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War,” *Journal of American History* 58:3 (December 1971), 667.

<sup>34</sup> J.P. Holland to Hubert J. Scallon, 25 May 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1266, File: Morals and Conduct.

<sup>35</sup> “Roster of Officers Performing Provost Marshal and Military Police Duty, USASOS,” 13 January 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1291, File: Military Police.

was not afraid to express his views widely. His attitudes were shared by many of his colleagues<sup>36</sup>

The letter also indicates that justice was not a high priority among provost marshals, as Holland had already concluded the men were guilty. Other historians have made similar observations. Potts and Potts argue that black GIs received harsher treatment than whites at the hands of the Provost Corps. During one Brisbane brawl between black and white GIs, a US officer was heard to utter that where he was from, the blacks would have been beaten whether they were guilty or not. They also point out that black GIs often were overly desperate when arrested by state police because they expected the same harsh treatment that they received from the Provost Corps. When a Queensland constable captured a black soldier after a foot chase through Brisbane in 1943, the latter allegedly expected to be summarily shot.<sup>37</sup>

Given that officers within the Provost Corps had a low opinion of black GIs, it is no surprise that the lower ranks also had poor relations with black GIs. On paper, American commanders wished to employ men of high calibre as MPs, however in practice this was rare. MPs were almost always white and many MPs had no training in police work. In the first chaotic months of the American occupation, many MPs were drawn from combat units rather than police battalions. Even in 1943, most base sections in Australia were still undermanned and using police auxiliaries. Some members of actual MP battalions, such as the 738<sup>th</sup>, were characterized as “unsuited for police work because of habits of insobriety, lack of dependability, physical weaknesses, physical build, and

---

<sup>36</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 64.

<sup>37</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 299.



mental development.”<sup>38</sup> So long as military authorities allowed such men to play at policemen, it was little wonder that relations between MPs and black GIs were abysmal.

Giving whites police power over black personnel resulted in many abuses, and in a few instances the conflicts probably led to death. Several Australian oral accounts describe the summary executions of black soldiers at the hands of military policemen. Although some of these claims were probably just wartime rumours, there is enough evidence to indicate that some stories were true. Brisbane resident Frank Higgins relayed detailed and damning oral testimony concerning summary executions of black troops. This former supervisor in the Commonwealth’s Department of the Interior told an interviewer that he had had

an American friend, Lieutenant Christensen who had many blacks under his command. He was himself based at Somerville House in South Brisbane where many US officers lived. He told me that in one incident twelve negroes had been executed in Brisbane by the US military for alleged petrol stealing.<sup>39</sup>

Buttressing the oral testimony of summary executions was the fact that white servicemen murdered black GIs in the United States during the war. Sitkoff remarks that a black soldier was lynched at Fort Benning in 1941 and 28 black troops were shot during a 1942 riot in Louisiana.<sup>40</sup> In the Australian context, we have a few documented cases where black servicemen were shot in murky circumstances. Potts and Potts mention that one

---

<sup>38</sup> F.S. Clark “Memorandum for Special Services Officer, Provost Marshal General,” 09 April 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 25, Box 80, File: Provost Marshal Investigations; Sitkoff, “Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War,” 667; US MP Corps Regimental Museum, “The Provost Marshal’s History: Campaigns of the Pacific, 1941-1947” quoted in Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 299; F.S. Clark to Base Commanders, 09 April 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 25, Box 80, File: Provost Marshal Investigations.

<sup>39</sup> Byrnes, ed., *Australia Remembers*, 35. Somerville House is an independent school that the US army commandeered during the war.

<sup>40</sup> Sitkoff, “Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War,” 668.

Australian daily reported that an MP shot a black deserter in the back after he tried to flee.<sup>41</sup> US military reports also reveal that the abovementioned Captain Hubert J. Scallon shot and killed a black sergeant in 1942, which resulted in a board of inquiry investigation. The board concluded that Scallon acted in self-defence, but there were so many irregularities with its findings that it was ordered to reconvene. The board came to the same conclusion and Scallon was subsequently stationed in New Guinea by 1943.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the disparities of power between black and white soldiers in Australia, African American troops sometimes fought back. In May 1942, members of Company C of the 96<sup>th</sup> Engineers, stationed near Townsville, mutinied against their captain after he assaulted one of his men. According to the army report, the company was rife with discontent because the captain, Francis H. Williams, was a martinet whose “rough and abusive language, grated on the colored soldiers of his command.”<sup>43</sup> The soldiers also suffered from low morale because they were overworked and lacked recreational facilities.<sup>44</sup>

Incensed over the assault on their comrade and tired of Williams’s poor leadership, several men in the company decided to kill their captain. The mutineers planned to do away with Williams once he left his tent, but when they executed their plan they only managed to wound his first sergeant. Williams and another officer fled the

---

<sup>41</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 300.

<sup>42</sup> J.P. Holland to Hubert J. Scallon, 25 May 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1266, File: Morals and Conduct; L.S Ostrander to Commanding Officer, Base Section No. 3, 28 May 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 185, File: 291.2; “Notes for Col. Soderholm,” [no date], NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1293, File: Military Police; “Roster of Officers Performing Provost Marshal and Military Police Duty, USASOS,” NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1291, File: Military Police.

<sup>43</sup> “Resume of Events in the Incident of May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1942, Concerning the 96<sup>th</sup> Engineers at Ross River Queensland,” NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 185, File: 291.2, 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

camp and made their way to Townsville, while officers from a neighbouring company came to investigate the sound of gunfire. They too were attacked by the mutineers. The situation became so desperate for the officers that one of them ignited the base's ammunition dump with gasoline so the mutineers could not use its contents. After holding the officers under siege for over two hours, the mutineers, realizing the magnitude of their actions, ended the attack.<sup>45</sup>

The mutineers faced no repercussions. Soon after the riot, Captain Williams was relieved of his command, and all the arms in the camp were removed.<sup>46</sup> The company was transferred the following month to New Guinea, and court martial charges were proffered against Williams, the officer who fled, and ten NCOs for not doing their utmost to suppress the mutiny.<sup>47</sup> The mutineers were not punished or even charged because nobody in the company would testify against them.<sup>48</sup> Later, Major General Julian F. Barnes chaired a staff conference where it was decided that the trials against the white officers be held in abeyance because most of the men were now participating in a combat mission in New Guinea.<sup>49</sup> The lack of witnesses helps explain why the mutineers were not punished, but events outside of Australia were also a factor. By May 1942, operations in New Guinea were taking on great importance. MacArthur, had decided to

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 2-4.

<sup>46</sup> Julian F. Barnes to Chief of Staff, Southwest Pacific Area, 25 May 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 185, File: 291.2, 1.

<sup>47</sup> "Notes on Staff Conference relating to Report of Inspector General and General Court-Martial Charges arising out of the armed riot in Company "C", 96<sup>th</sup> Engineer Separate Battalion, near Townsville, on May 22, 1942," NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Report of Riot in Townsville, 2.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 4.

take the fight to the Japanese.<sup>50</sup> Yet, in the spring of 1942, men and materiel were in short supply given that the European theatre enjoyed priority in these respects.<sup>51</sup> MacArthur needed all the manpower available, even mutineers and poor officers.<sup>52</sup>

Not only did the lack of manpower in the SWPA mean exploitation of all possible manpower, but it also meant that black morale was a concern for military authorities. Surprisingly, complaints of white racism were sometimes investigated by military authorities and overt racists were occasionally brought to heel. In 1942, an anonymous special agent, reported on the morale of black troops in the Sydney area. He observed that blacks complained about their officers and said that “some are Southerners who just don’t like colored troops. The men feel that such officers don’t have their welfare at heart and don’t always act in the best interests of those in their commands.”<sup>53</sup> The agent concluded that such ill treatment could only be detrimental to the morale of the men and cause them to lose faith in their leaders.<sup>54</sup> The commander of the 493<sup>rd</sup> Port Battalion, a southern gentleman who held a distinct antebellum view of blacks, was removed from command after an investigation concluded that his racism and poor leadership constantly antagonized his men. The report concerning the commander’s removal intimates that it was not an isolated occurrence.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> MacArthur, *Reminiscences*, 154.

<sup>51</sup> Harry A. Gailey, *The War in the Pacific, From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay* (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995), 209.

<sup>52</sup> “Notes on Staff Conference relating to Report of Inspector General and General Court-Martial Charges arising out of the armed riot in Company “C”, 96<sup>th</sup> Engineer Separate Battalion, near Townsville, on May 22, 1942,” NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Report of Riot in Townsville;

<sup>53</sup> Special Agent 1961 to Officer in Charge, 03 December 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1266, File: Morals and Conduct.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Lewis F. Shull to Commanding Officer Headquarters Base A, 21 January 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 27, Box 90, File: Race, 4.

The preoccupation with black morale in Australia mirrored opinion in the United States at the highest reaches of authority. After black troops rioted on a number of bases in America, the War Department recognized black morale was a serious problem. In 1942, it “urged all white officers to treat blacks with the utmost care and diplomacy.”<sup>56</sup> This was a major change in American policy because the War Department had hitherto considered black morale an irrelevance.<sup>57</sup> In the Australian context, this new policy highlighted a cleavage within the US military between overt racists who wished to keep blacks “in their place” and those who frowned on such treatment because it agitated African Americans, undermined morale, and hurt the war effort.

The preoccupation with black morale and concomitant fear of discontent are also evidenced by the visit of President Roosevelt’s special envoy. Bishop John A. Gregg, of the African Methodist Church, was sent to Australia to investigate the condition of black GIs and report back on discrimination and poor treatment. US authorities were so worried that he might incite African Americans they decided to spy on him while he addressed a crowd of black troops at Cluden on 23 July 1943. An agent watched the speech, took notes, and reported the minutiae of the bishop’s address. He observed with relief that

the speaker made no mention of the recent racial disorders in the United States, nor did he at any time refer to the instances of discrimination and segregation to which Negro troops have been subjected in the country [Australia]. Although it is part of his mission to uncover and report such things, he is not resorting to loud acclaim to resurrect some unpleasant things that have occurred in the past.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Sitkoff, “Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War,” 669.

<sup>57</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 84.

<sup>58</sup> Agent 1961 “Memorandum for the Officer in Charge,” 23 July 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 27, Box 90, File: Race.

It is remarkable that Gregg was put under surveillance because he was President Roosevelt's personal envoy sent to investigate the morale of black troops and reports of race discrimination in the SWPA! US military authorities clearly considered black morale a matter of importance and they feared unrest. Combined with a concern over scrutiny from back home and exacerbated by a lack of manpower in the SWPA black morale was a major concern for American authorities. This meant that black troops were afforded a greater degree of freedom in Australia and more interaction with Australians than one might expect at first glance. The entire context of race relations in the US armed forces had implications for the placement and movement of African American personnel in Australia.

### **Black GIs and Australians**

If relations between white and black Americans were marked by episodes of violence, suspicion, and mutual loathing, the same cannot be said for Australian civilians and black GIs. Many civilians, in contrast to the Commonwealth government, welcomed African American GIs warmly. This is surprising given Australia's history concerning Aboriginals and non-European immigrants. Australia of course had a long history of subjugating the continent's Aboriginals. Throughout the nineteenth century, relations between the land's original occupants and European settlers could only be described as low-level warfare. Aboriginals did not accept the dispossession of their land or European dominion; both were achieved through state sanctioned force.<sup>59</sup> The basic motive for the

---

<sup>59</sup> Markus, *Australian Race Relations*, 33

war on Aboriginals was economic, but racial arguments were used to justify European actions which at their most basic amounted to stealing, raping, and killing. Ultimately, Aboriginals were seen by some as subhuman and therefore outside the bounds of accepted morality. This exempted Europeans from unethical behaviour and moral judgement.<sup>60</sup>

By the late 1890s, racial ideology that justified land theft and murder was later applied to state government policies that “protected” Aboriginals. As was explained in chapter two, at the heart of protectionist legislation was a desire to control Aboriginals, confine them to reserves, and limit their contact with whites. Some state government policies were also motivated by the desire to limit Aboriginal reproduction and fears over miscegenation. In the Northern Territory, whites were not allowed to marry full Aboriginals, but sex between “half-castes” and whites was encouraged to “breed out colour.”<sup>61</sup> Queensland forbade marriages between whites and “half-castes” in the 1920s except in a few cases and banned such marriages altogether in 1934.<sup>62</sup>

It was not just Aboriginals who were the victims of racism and notions of white superiority in Australia. Chinese and Melanesians began arriving in the 1840s, many as indentured labourers. Although they numbered only in the thousands during the second half of the 1800s, white Australians resented their presence on racial and economic grounds.<sup>63</sup> Resistance to the presence of Asians increased as racial determinism in Western culture became more popular. As Andrew Markus notes, “[b]y the end of the

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 58.

[nineteenth] century Australians had a clear concept of themselves as different from and superior to all non-European peoples which was buttressed by the apparent global dominance of European civilisation.”<sup>64</sup> Australians on the political left in particular combined these notions of racial superiority with a fear of non-unionized Asian labour. This trend was especially strong in Queensland, where Asians made up a sizable minority of the population.<sup>65</sup> According to Raymond Evans “[r]epublicans and socialists championed white racial integrity and crusaded tirelessly against its alternative, a multiracial society, which they associated with images of disease, moral impurity, and economic decline.”<sup>66</sup> Those on the left were not alone in their condemnation of an Asian presence in Queensland; other Anglo-Australians also feared race “swamping and pollution.”<sup>67</sup> The trends of discrimination and exclusion culminated in stringent policies against the immigration of Chinese and other non-whites by various colonial governments; by 1888, all colonies had laws in place that restricted non-European immigration. New South Wales, which had the most uncompromising policy, prohibited the immigration of all non-Europeans in 1896. With Federation in 1901, the Commonwealth government harmonized the former colonies’ immigration restrictions with the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act.<sup>68</sup> The law enforced what became known as the White Australia Policy; it effectively prohibited all non-European immigration until after the Second World War.

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 72; Evans, *A History of Queensland*, 131.

<sup>66</sup> Evans, *A History of Queensland*, 129.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>68</sup> Markus, *Australian Race Relations*, 114-15.



Given Australian history and contemporary policies, black Americans could have received a poor reception in theory. However, this did not happen. Many Australians had strong affections for American troops regardless of skin tone. Moorooka resident Pamela Davenport admitted she had tender feelings for black GIs and recalled that they “were always so cheerful and I loved their smiles – so white against their polished black skin. I remember my excitement when, one night, we answered the door to a cheerful negro who seemed, to a small child, of mammoth proportions. He was the first I had seen.”<sup>69</sup> A communist party worker recollected that she entertained black troops at her home in Sydney, where they sang choral music.<sup>70</sup> Some black American GIs also recalled that Australians treated them rather well, especially when compared to their treatment by white Americans. James Baker of the 91<sup>st</sup> Engineers stated the “only racist situations that I saw we had was [sic] from white soldiers, American soldiers. I never encountered any racial problems with Australian soldiers, never.”<sup>71</sup> Joan Houghton from Brisbane also had fond memories of black GIs remembering that they “were a happy lot, and they had big wide smiles and pure white teeth and they’d wave to everybody in Queensland Street, which was quite okay.”<sup>72</sup> Otis Carter, an African American sailor aboard the USS Regal and USS Casablanca, observed “I never heard a black serviceman saying he had a bad time in Australia.”<sup>73</sup> Another Australian recalled “[w]e tried to develop particularly good relations with the black soldiers and encourage them, so we

---

<sup>69</sup> Byrnes, ed., *Australia Remembers 1945-1995*, 20.

<sup>70</sup> D.M. Horner & J. Penglase, *When the War Came to Australia: Memories of the Second World War* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992), 112.

<sup>71</sup> Baker, *Black Soldier Blues*.

<sup>72</sup> Horner, *When the War Came to Australia*, 112.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

used to invite them to various functions.”<sup>74</sup> A woman from Sydney remembered that black Americans “made us feel like we were someone, because they said wonderful things to us, like we had eyes like stars – they sparkled like stars.”<sup>75</sup>

Many Australians welcomed black GIs as saviours and were shocked when they witnessed the Jim Crow mentality of white Americans. After inviting a black soldier to a bar in July 1942, a federal MLA was horrified when the bartender refused to serve his new friend. The bartender told the two men that the American authorities asked him not to serve black troops alcohol.<sup>76</sup> So incensed was the politician that he wrote to the Minister of the Army, complaining of the treatment of the soldier. Highlighting the decentralized nature of the American command, Colonel L.S. Ostrander wrote to an Australian military liaison and told him that it was not military policy to deny black GIs the sale of liquor.<sup>77</sup> A local commander, acting on his own initiative and without orders, had decided to implement the “colour bar.”

US and Australian authorities also recognized the generally friendly treatment Australian civilians accorded black GIs. General Brett, writing to the joint chiefs in early 1942, complained that racial antagonisms between black and white GIs were being exacerbated because of the “lack of understanding on the part of Australians of the relationship customarily preserved in [the] Continental United States and the consequent

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>76</sup> G.W. Martens to the Hon. F.M. Forde, 20 July 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 185, File: 291.2.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. See L.S. Ostrander to Captain R.B. Randell, 06 August 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 185, File: 291.2.

well intentioned but ill advised attitude of civilians toward negro troops.”<sup>78</sup> White GIs, incensed over racial mixing, lashed out at black troops. The Australian Provost Corps also noted the good relations between black GIs and Australian troops in Brisbane but recommended that fraternization be discouraged.<sup>79</sup>

Much of the literature on the subject indicates that although they were not utopian, relations between black troops and Australians were generally amicable. Potts and Potts argue that upon their arrival, “[o]ne of the biggest surprises to both Australian and American officials was, in fact, the general warmth of the reception, not just to a few black nurses but to thousands of black servicemen.”<sup>80</sup> A recent study by Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon, which examines black American “voices,” echoes this sentiment. They maintain that many blacks were well treated and encountered less discrimination in Australia than back home.<sup>81</sup>

Still, other studies have been less sanguine. Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor maintain that though blacks received better treatment than back home, they still suffered racism at the hands of Australians.<sup>82</sup> Libby Connor and Lynette Finch along with Taylor and Saunders argue elsewhere that blacks were seen as hyper-sexualized and because of this, white Australians saw them as a threat.<sup>83</sup> There is probably some truth to this

---

<sup>78</sup> Cable 1045, Brett to AG, War Department, 25 March 1942, US National Archives (Suitland), RG407, War Department, AG 381, Section 1 “Far East Section,” quoted in McIntyre, *Paragons of Glamour*, 458.

<sup>79</sup> Saunders, *War on the Home Front*, 70.

<sup>80</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 187.

<sup>81</sup> Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon “Jim Crow Down Under? African American Encounters with White Australia, 1942-1945,” *Pacific Historical Review* 71 (No. 4 2002): 631.

<sup>82</sup> Kay Saunders and Helen Taylor “The Reception of Black Servicemen in Australia During World War II: The Resilience of White Australia,” *Journal of Black Studies* 25 (January 1995): 347. See also Saunders “Cloud of Lust” and Saunders, *War on the Home Front*.

<sup>83</sup> Libby Connor et al. *Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939-1945 War* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992), 158.

assessment, for there were elements of stereotyping even in the positive portrayals described above, and many Australians did not like to see black GIs with white women. Rosemary Campbell also downplays positive relations in her work *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity*, arguing that press censorship “limited negative criticism on the black presence, thus giving rise to an unaccustomed feeling among many black Americans that Australians were far more accepting of colour than people of the United States.”<sup>84</sup> This is a shaky argument. In fact, Australian newspapers published many stories during the war about crimes committed by black Americans and these may have been printed to discourage interaction.<sup>85</sup> If anything, press coverage had a negative effect on relations.

Despite the qualifications of Saunders and Campbell, African Americans received better treatment from Australian civilians than from GIs and many whites in the United States. Why was this the case given Australian history and existing policies designed to keep non-whites out of the country? First, blacks were regarded as saviours just like white GIs. The fear of Japanese invasion was genuine throughout 1942, black GIs were part of an army that was going to keep the Japanese out. In addition, Australian legislation had done its job when it came to race. The White Australia Policy had kept out non-Europeans since 1901 and the country’s small Asian population had been in sharp decline since its inception. Including Aboriginals, there were only around 100,000 non-Europeans in a country of seven million.<sup>86</sup> Because of protective legislation,

---

<sup>84</sup> Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 111.

<sup>85</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>86</sup> Markus, *Australian Race Relations*, 152; Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 189.

Aboriginals were largely separated from white Australians.<sup>87</sup> Many Australians had never seen a non-European before; their racism was abstract and the country was devoid of racial antagonisms unlike in the United States. Also, it was more difficult to characterize blacks as inferior when compared to Aboriginals. Unlike Aboriginals, whose ancient Stone Age culture some Australians used as *prima facie* evidence of inferiority, African Americans often had extensive formal education and embodied a culture similar to Australians. Perhaps most importantly, the presence of black Americans did not represent the same threat as Asians had in the 1880s. There was no fear of race swamping or economic competition. After all, the White Australia Policy was still in place; African Americans were simply visitors who would leave the country after the war ended. It is important to mention, that the reception of black Americans in Great Britain during the war paralleled their welcome in Australia. Reynolds notes that the “British people transcended the stereotypes about “negroes” and welcomed non white GIs.”<sup>88</sup> Instead of being scared of blacks, many Britons were fascinated by their exoticism.<sup>89</sup>

Although relations were generally sound, we must keep them in perspective. One should not assume that relations lacked tension or that Australians treated blacks uniformly well. Australians who encountered black GIs reacted variably to their presence and treated them variably as well. After all, if racism and nativism had not existed in Australia there would have been no White Australia Policy or laws designed to control Aboriginals. Furthermore, we must not assume that the behaviour of all black

---

<sup>87</sup> Markus, *Australian Race Relations*, 152.

<sup>88</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 302.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

GIs was consistently good. Determining if relations were good or bad really depends on which Australians and which GIs we are examining.

Australian residents on several occasions lodged protests with American and Australian authorities over the conduct or presence of black servicemen. These protests are telling for not only do they show the difficulty in generalizing about how Australians treated blacks, they specifically reveal why some were upset over their presence. In March 1942, a US morale officer forwarded the contents of a letter to his commanding general from an Australian friend who had complained to him of the “coon problem” in Brisbane.<sup>90</sup> This friend complained that blacks needed their own recreational facilities in the city so that US military authorities could then implement a Jim Crow style colour line in Australia. He blamed a series of brawls in the city on black GIs and told the morale officer that he feared for his fellow Australians because “you know how elemental the darkies are and how quickly hate and unreason can spread amongst them.”<sup>91</sup> This anonymous informant spoke for a minority of Australians, who did not want black GIs stationed in the country, or if they had to be present, wanted them kept away from Australians as much as possible.

On 25 May 1942, the Chairman of the Barcaldine Shire Council expressed this latter desire when he wrote to F.W. Bulcock, Queensland’s agricultural minister, complaining about the black troops in the area. From the tone of the letter, the chairman, C. Lloyd-Jones, was a friend of the minister, whom he addressed as Frank. What raised Lloyd-Jones’s ire was not GI misbehaviour but that “the public are not treating them as

---

<sup>90</sup> MO to CG, 23 March 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 985, File: 291.2.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

Negroes should be treated. They are mixing too freely, thereby causing the Negroes to consider that they are equal to anyone else.”<sup>92</sup> Lloyd-Jones believed this treatment was counterproductive because it encouraged a bad element within the black unit, which he felt had a love of brawling. Another problem for the chairman was that the community was “making far too much of these chaps,” and the officers were “too young to control niggers.”<sup>93</sup> Lloyd-Jones desired greater controls over the GIs.<sup>94</sup>

Bulcock acted as an intermediary for his friend and wrote to the headquarters of Base Section Three in Brisbane. Addressing his letter to the commanding officer, Bulcock professed that the problems in the shire were minor, but he did not doubt that the US authorities “would take appropriate action...to safeguard the local position.”<sup>95</sup> In response to the complaint, Colonel William H. Donaldson telephoned the commander of the troops in Barcaldine who agreed to handle the matter personally.<sup>96</sup>

An incident in Chinchilla Shire prompted a similar civilian complaint in November 1942. Three dozen black soldiers stationed in nearby Columboola visited the neighbouring shire almost nightly, and on November 4 a black sergeant attacked a white GI, seemingly without provocation according to a Queensland Police report. During the fight, the constable pulled the black sergeant away and arrested him because it looked like he was going to kill the white American. The GI threatened the constable, vowing

---

<sup>92</sup> C. Lloyd-Jones to F.W. Bulcock, 25 May 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 185, File: 291.2.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Frank N. Bulcock to the Commanding Officer, 29 May 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 185, File: 291.2.

<sup>96</sup> William H. Donaldson Jr. to Brigadier General F.S. Clark, 03 June 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 45, Box 185, File 291.2.

“I’ll know your face again, I’ll get you for this with a knife or a gun.”<sup>97</sup> Because of the fight, the man’s superior officer barred him from the town for two weeks and uncharacteristically arranged for black MPs to patrol the area.<sup>98</sup> Police later learned that the black sergeant was not wholly to blame for the fight, because the white GI had insulted him.<sup>99</sup>

Nevertheless, the incident prompted T.W. Reid, chairman of Chinchilla Shire Council, to write to the American Legation in Brisbane and ask that black GIs be barred from parts of the town or be allowed leave in limited numbers only. However, the incident was not the only reason for the letter. It may have been a fig leaf for the chairman’s real concern. According to Reid, “one local body has permitted admission to dances conducted under its auspices and has in other directions lionised the Negroes to a degree that is not conducive [sic] to the future peace of anyone.”<sup>100</sup> The chairman was upset that blacks and white women intermingled in a social setting and he wished to put an end to it. What the chairman meant by lionising the Negroes looks like a thinly veiled complaint that blacks were not being kept “in their place.” That some town residents saw no reason to treat blacks differently from whites incensed Reid and indicates a schism within the community. Reid said as much in his letter, “I realise, of course, that among the local residents there are those with views entirely contrary to anything that would

---

<sup>97</sup> Constable H.N. Smith to Inspector of Police, 05 November 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>98</sup> Sergeant E. Brown to Inspector of Police, 07 November 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>99</sup> Sergeant E. Brown to Inspector of Police, 09 December 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>100</sup> T.W. Reid to Secretary American Legation, 12 November, 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.



interfere with the freedom or the enjoyment of the Negroes.”<sup>101</sup> Tellingly, Reid made no requests to restrict the movements of white GIs in the town.

The complaint reached the state police who conducted an investigation into the behaviour of black GIs in the town. Constable M. Flynn interviewed the chairman and learned that local doctor Keith Hill made the complaint. Under questioning, Reid confessed that the doctor was the only complainant and that “anything he had written in the...letter was only “hearsay” as far as he was concerned.”<sup>102</sup> The chairman added that the local branch of the Returned Sailors’ Soldiers’ and Airmen’s’ Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA) were responsible for “lionizing” black GIs and added that he believed blacks were getting too friendly with local girls.<sup>103</sup> The original complainant was also interviewed and Dr. Hill revealed that though he had no knowledge of black unruliness, he nonetheless “objected on general principles to the Negroes associating with white women and the probable results should they be allowed to get too familiar with them.”<sup>104</sup> The only “rebuke” of black behaviour the doctor could offer was that some African American GIs had offered candies to women at the local cinema.<sup>105</sup>

Flynn’s investigation next took him to Denis McNamara, the secretary of the town’s branch of the RSSAILA, who knew that Hill and “his crowd” had made the complaint.<sup>106</sup> The secretary suggested that local political jealousies precipitated the protest because Hill was feuding with the RSSAILA. McNamara added that when black

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Constable M. Flynn to Inspector of Police, 09 December 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

GIs first arrived in the area, local organizers refused their entry to dances. However, after he learned that “the majority of regular patrons objected to this refusal” the GIs were permitted to attend all subsequent dances.<sup>107</sup> The chairman concluded that he had neither seen African American troops misbehave at dances nor received complaints about them. Constable Flynn noted in his report that the only incident of note regarding black soldiers was the original fight on November 4 and he had never personally witnessed poor conduct by black GIs. Furthermore, there would likely be no future clashes between white and black GIs because he believed that “the arrangements now made for the control of the Negroes at Columboola are satisfactory.”<sup>108</sup> These arrangements probably separated white GIs from black personnel in the area.

Another Queensland Police report noted a series of complaints from the residents of Red Hill, an inner-city Brisbane suburb, regarding the conduct of African American troops. According to Queensland Police Sergeant R. Sabien, black troops started attending dances at the Ithaca Hall in the spring of 1942 and their boisterous behaviour upset local residents. In response to complaints, American MPs and shore patrolmen began to visit the hall, which improved the conduct of black troops. Despite admitting that the behaviour of blacks had been fairly good since the original protests were made and that the dances were “conducted in a proper manner,” the sergeant reported in May 1943 that the “residents in the locality consider the hall should be placed out of bounds to the Negroes so as to prevent them congregating in considerable numbers in a residential

---

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

area.”<sup>109</sup> Regardless of the GIs’ good conduct and the reality that no residents had been molested by blacks, Sabien concluded that “the fact remains that many of the residents fear the Negroes and they will not be satisfied until the Negroes are stopped from coming into a residential area in considerable numbers.”<sup>110</sup> It is possible that residents were also angry that white women attended the dances, albeit in limited numbers. The sergeant possibly sympathized with black troops, because he did not recommend barring blacks as local residents wished. Instead, he hoped that the problem would go away because the Dr. Carver Service Club had opened in South Brisbane. Sabien hoped that this club, dedicated to the recreation of black servicemen, would make the Ithaca Hall obsolete.<sup>111</sup>

The relations black troops enjoyed with Australian women were a key reason for complaints by some Australians. Miscegenation between Aboriginals and white Australians was taboo and illegal in Queensland and other states. The fear of miscegenation extended to black Americans and white Australian women. White superiority still enjoyed wide currency in Australia during the war and few things affronted this sensibility more than interracial sex.<sup>112</sup> Reynolds notes a similar mentality among Britons during the war; they treated black GIs surprisingly well, but drew the line at miscegenation. In Britain, interracial sex brought with it fears of contamination and the lowering of social status.<sup>113</sup> An episode in February 1943 indicates that this mentality was shared by a number of Australians. Queensland’s Minister of Public Instruction Arthur Jones contacted the state police because black GIs were taking women to the

---

<sup>109</sup> Sergeant R.H. Sabien to Inspector of Police, 05 May 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12039.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Markus, *Australian Race Relations*, 111.

<sup>113</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 308.

grounds of the South Brisbane State School for sexual liaisons. Jones complained that black GIs and their girlfriends could be “seen any night entering the premises, and their conduct is unseemly.”<sup>114</sup> For the sake of the children attending the school, Jones asked that police stop these associations.<sup>115</sup> The minister was displeased over such improprieties occurring at a school, but he also objected to black servicemen having sex with Australian women.

A more detailed and explicit complaint about such relations was made by Darra resident Ernest Cliffe in December 1943. Cliffe wrote Queensland’s Commissioner of Police and complained that black troops often visited his town to attend dances. Because many of the townsmen were labourers and absent for days at a time, Cliffe worried that this left “our Families open to molestation by any evil minded individual that came along.”<sup>116</sup> Apparently the town’s women were particularly frightened because of the black presence, which induced Cliffe to request that the local dance hall be closed to African Americans and that they be banned from the town altogether.<sup>117</sup> The fear of miscegenation and the desire to protect the town’s women from supposed black lust was at the heart of Cliffe’s complaint.

Queensland Police shared Cliffe’s concerns. Commissioner Carroll responded immediately to his request; only a week later police stationed near Darra had completed a report of the situation. Similar to other complaints about the presence of black troops, there were some incongruities between the original allegations and what the investigation

---

<sup>114</sup> Inspector O’Driscoll to Commissioner of Police, 18 February 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> E.A. Cliffe to Police Commissioner, 13 December 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

turned up. Rather than fearing black GIs, some of Cliffe's neighbours had taken to entertaining them in their homes. Police learned that Cliffe was particularly incensed because US military authorities were allowing white women to ride around in army trucks with black soldiers. Still, Cliffe's concern for the town's women could have been genuine, as the report pointed out that a black serviceman had recently attacked a woman in the town.<sup>118</sup> However, his fear of black troops was overblown. The attack was the only assault committed by a black serviceman in the area in the previous twelve months.

Sergeant H. Lewis interviewed other Darra residents and some were alarmed by the presence of so many black troops. In particular, they disliked soldiers loitering around their homes and claimed African American servicemen took on defiant attitudes when asked not to trespass through their yards. In his conclusion, the sergeant wanted to ban black servicemen from the town and station MPs in the area.<sup>119</sup> The district's inspector of police met with American authorities to negotiate the ban but learned that because Darra was part of a military area, black troops would not be barred.<sup>120</sup>

Some Darra residents continued to petition the Queensland authorities to bar African American troops from the town in the months that followed and a deputation even met with Commissioner Carroll, a member of the legislative assembly, and a government minister in August 1944, in an effort to close the Darra dance hall. That dances were held three times a week angered Darra resident A. Elliott, who claimed that a black soldier tried to kill a 71-year-old woman only the week before the meeting. He

---

<sup>118</sup> Sergeant H. Lewis to Inspector of Police, 20 December 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Inspector of Police to Commissioner, 29 December 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

added that the town's women would not venture out at night and that black troops had molested his own daughter. Cliffe, who led the deputation, confirmed the attack on the elderly lady, stating the GI had committed the crime after entering her home. He maintained that Queensland Police believed someone had entered her house and added the dig that Darra "seemed to be the playground for the negroes."<sup>121</sup>

During the meeting, authorities heard a claim that a black serviceman threatened to bomb the home of another town resident, John McCormack, after he was told to get off the man's property. Cliffe again complained that, when they were drinking, African American servicemen were liable to enter any home. In addition, he protested the fact that taxis brought in women from nearby Ipswich. Another Darra native, W. Anderson, believed that black GIs were sex starved and wanted any women, be they twenty or sixty. Finally, Cliffe claimed black truck drivers had repeatedly forced him off the road and US authorities did not wish to bar blacks from Darra because they would then flood into South Brisbane, overwhelming an area which had been essentially set aside for black recreation and entertainment.<sup>122</sup>

In response to these complaints, Commissioner Carroll mentioned that some whites had welcomed black troops when they arrived. Furthermore, he informed the deputation that when he brought their complaints to the US authorities, they responded that the problem was that some Darra residents wanted the servicemen there and some did not. The commissioner also told the residents that he would do something about the

---

<sup>121</sup> "Notes of Deputation of Residents from Darra Requesting Closure of Darra Dance Hall, 15 August 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

taxicabs immediately. The meeting concluded with the minister's assurance that Carroll would contact the American authorities to effect a solution.<sup>123</sup>

Once again, Queensland Police moved into high gear to investigate the residents' claims of black misconduct. With regard to molesting females, police in Darra concluded that blacks were blameless, because many women and girls enjoyed their presence and encouraged them to attend dances.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, the investigator concluded that there was no caravan of taxis ferrying women, but instead women from Brisbane took the train or black GIs brought them in US army trucks. Police also investigated the alleged attack on the old lady and discovered that a black serviceman did try to enter her home after a drinking binge. Yet, the police remarked that the woman had no marks or bruises and "a table just inside the window in question...was covered in crockery and neither the table or the crockery was disturbed."<sup>125</sup> The supposed victim, police discovered, was suffering from dementia and residents told police that the woman's mind had "been wandering for some years and little or no reliance can be placed on any statement made by her."<sup>126</sup> Police concluded that the serviceman did not strangle the woman or in any way attack her.<sup>127</sup>

Queensland Police also placed little stock in McCormack's claim that a black GI threatened to bomb him because he was a convicted criminal whose family was "of the hooligan element."<sup>128</sup> Before the war, McCormack had robbed and assaulted an old man,

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> From the context of the report, molestation means to harass and irritate rather than to sexually assault.

<sup>125</sup> Detective Sergeant No. 2893 to Sub-Inspector, 18 September 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

leading the investigator to conclude “no reliance can be placed on any statement made by him.”<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, police did admit that black GIs had committed a few serious crimes, but generally, problems were minimal. The investigator also noted that since many African American servicemen had moved out of the area there would be fewer future complaints from Darra residents.<sup>130</sup> Police followed up with another report of the situation in October 1944 and noted that the attendance of black soldiers at the Darra dance hall had dropped off. The investigator added that “the dances are well conducted, and there is no cause for complaint in this regard.”<sup>131</sup> Although protests had died down, the police believed that as long as African Americans remained in the area and were “welcomed into the homes of people in Darra” complaints would continue.<sup>132</sup>

It is not only civilian complaints and police reports that give us some understanding about relations between Australian civilians and black GIs. In early 1944, US military authorities compiled two special reports that investigated in detail the conduct of black servicemen in the country and gauged Australian attitudes toward them. The overall purpose of each report was to help devise a scheme for black soldiers who were on leave. Early incidents and exaggerated complaints had occurred when African American personnel were in training camps or on construction details. As the war progressed, their presence in Australia changed. By early 1944, many black servicemen were stationed in forward battle areas and authorities wished to know if Australia could accommodate them when on furlough. Authorities suspected that troops on leave from

---

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> H. Lewis to Inspector of Police, 20 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.



combat areas were likely to seize the day more boisterously. The first report, issued in April 1944, concerned the conduct of black servicemen in Sydney. The investigation, conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Getzoff, the Inspector General for Base Section Seven, is a treasure trove of information; not only did it report the conduct of black troops in the city but it also revealed the views of several prominent civilians, the Australian military police, and the state's Commissioner of Police.

The report also highlights the schism among Australians regarding the presence of black Americans and lends support to the contention that the divide was hardly equal. In Sydney at least, if people thought about the black presence at all, they likely looked upon it favourably or with indifference. According to Inspector General Getzoff, it was difficult to ascertain the general feeling of the Sydney population with respect to the presence of black GIs. Despite the difficulty, the colonel concluded that the

general feeling as revealed by interviews which I have had, is that since the negro soldier is an American soldier, he has a logical right to visit Sydney on furlough or be stationed here if military necessity so dictates. It was also indicated in such interviews that the majority of people do not come in contact with the negro soldier and are therefore in no position to give a considered opinion.<sup>133</sup>

Because of this lack of interaction, Getzoff concluded, "the general attitude is one of indifference as to their presence, rather than one of either friendliness or antipathy."<sup>134</sup>

In his report, inspector Getzoff commented on the comportment of the many black GIs he observed during the course of his investigation. He remarked that "their general demeanor is entirely compatible with the best interests of the service. I have

---

<sup>133</sup> Benjamin Getzoff to Commanding General, Base Section Seven, 15 April 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas, 6.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

observed relatively little drunkenness, no actual vandalism, and a stricter adherence to uniform regulations than is observed by white troops.”<sup>135</sup> An Australian provost marshal, responding to Getzoff’s questionnaire, confirmed these observations. He noted that African American troops were mostly law abiding and that they were almost never drunk outside the Booker T. Washington Club.<sup>136</sup> Relations with Australians living near the club were also good according to the provost marshal; black troops “attend other functions in this locality, also churches, and, [sic] I have not heard any complaints regarding their conduct.”<sup>137</sup>

State police had praise for the conduct of black servicemen. New South Wales’ Commissioner of Police, William J. MacKay, provided Getzoff with a report on the conduct of black troops in Sydney that he had previously written for the premier of the state. He had placed the Booker T. Washington Club under observation and concluded from that exercise that the conduct of black servicemen was without fault. He told the premier “[n]o coloured servicemen were seen under the influence of liquor...They did not even appear to speak to numerous unattended women passing within close proximity of the Club.”<sup>138</sup> The report included the observations of one police superintendent, which described the conduct of African American servicemen favourably. However, the

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Alex Lendrum to Benjamin Getzoff, 31 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495 Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas. By 1944, the Booker T. Washington Club was the main haunt for black GIs in Sydney. In his report, Getzoff states “[t]his club is the focal point of all colored activity in the Base Section...Other than this Club there is no military or semi-military installation for colored troops in this Base Section.” Getzoff to Commanding General, Base Section Seven, 15 April 1944. NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Commissioner of Police to the Under Secretary Premier’s Department, 24 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas, 1.

superintendent added that he did not consider “the mentality of a large number of these troops...to be of a high order and they could be described as overgrown school boys frolicking among themselves in a harmless and inoffensive manner.”<sup>139</sup> Given that many troops were overgrown school boys, that is to say young men in their late teens and early twenties, this observation is hardly surprising. Nevertheless, although disparaging and engaging in racial stereotyping, the superintendent had to admit that the parishioners at the church opposite the club were never molested or harassed. Another superintendent observed that the behaviour of black troops around the club was comparable to other Allied troops in the city. Even when he admitted that black GIs committed several stabbings in Sydney, the officer commented that there was usually “great provocation on the part of the Australians.”<sup>140</sup> The only complaints that the commissioner’s report contained related to the fact that some citizens did not like to see white women in their company.<sup>141</sup>

While the conduct of black servicemen was for the most part exemplary, there were still howls of protest from a small, vocal minority. Presbyterian minister George Cowie, in his interview with Getzoff, volunteered a number of complaints about black GIs. According to the reverend, the things he witnessed in front of the club were “frightful” and worse than anything he had seen in the slums of Glasgow and London.<sup>142</sup> The minister ran a marriage counselling clinic from the church across from the club and claimed that people would not come to see him because they were “frightened of the

---

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>142</sup> “Statement made by Rev. George Cowie,” 07 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas, 1.

nigger population when they speak to them and how they follow them round the street.”<sup>143</sup> The reverend also told Getzoff that he feared black GIs might stay after the war was over and make Surry Hills into a little Harlem. Only the removal of African Americans from the area would satisfy Cowie and he told Getzoff “if something is not done and done soon to remove this blot on the escutcheon of Surry Hills, then there will be a revolution of some kind, and more niggers will be killed than white men.”<sup>144</sup> All manner of vices in the locality found their genesis in the presence of black servicemen in the minister’s view: gambling was rampant because of black servicemen and worse still easy women (many of whom were supposedly Aboriginals) were establishing themselves in the community.<sup>145</sup> Given the controls placed on Australia’s Aboriginals, this was likely a lie or the reverend was referring to mixed race women. Nonetheless, it is telling that the minister feared another non-European group establishing itself in the community.

The church’s rector, Reverend Norman Fox also had unkind words. According to Fox, black GIs frequently blocked the sidewalk outside the club to play dice and baseball, which inconvenienced many residents and patients at two nearby hospitals. He also complained that the walkway to his house and the church grounds were sometimes used for sexual dalliances between Australian women and black GIs. Finally, he objected to what he considered the GIs’ propensity to accost young women and use vulgar language, which was always heard outside the club.<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>146</sup> “Statement Made by Rev. Norman Fox,” 07 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas, 1 & 2.

Getzoff interviewed local businessman Herbert S. Simpson who claimed that numerous prostitutes now roamed the area because of the black presence. Because of these prostitutes, black GIs apparently asked local girls for sex, assuming they were hookers as well. Loud shouting and obscenities were also a common problem according to Simpson; on one occasion a brick crashed through his window, which the businessman claimed, “was hurled by a nigger.”<sup>147</sup> Because of the soldiers’ seemingly bad conduct, Simpson suggested that military authorities shut down their club and provide the servicemen recreational facilities somewhere else.<sup>148</sup>

What did US authorities make of these complaints, since they contradicted their own observations and those of both the NSW Police and the Australian provost marshal? Inspector General Getzoff put little stock in the complainants’ tales of black misconduct. In his report, Getzoff dismissed the complaints as the bleatings of racists and concluded that their statements represented isolated incidents; there was no widespread immorality outside the club. Inspector Getzoff reserved harsh words for Reverend Cowie. He pointed out the reverend did not live in the area and dismissed his complaint as a plea for a White Australia Policy. The report noted that Cowie was also a shameless self-promoter who loved publicity.<sup>149</sup> Reverend Cowie’s fear over what the presence of African Americans meant for the future of the country’s White Australia Policy is telling. Since the policy was still in place, there was no question that black Americans would have to leave the country after the war. Nevertheless, the minister was scared that black GIs set a

---

<sup>147</sup> <sup>147</sup> “Statement Made by Herbert S. Simpson,” 07 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas, 1.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

precedent that would undermine the immigration policy that had existed since 1901. This also explains why his observations strayed so far from those of police investigators. The good conduct and dignified comportment of black GIs exploded notions of white superiority and represented a clear and present danger to the minister's world view.

In his final analysis, Colonel Getzoff concluded that the conduct of black servicemen did not bring disgrace on to the US military and their presence overburdened neither the state police nor the US Provost Corps. Furthermore, black troops were amenable to military discipline and Getzoff saw no problem with utilizing Sydney as a leave destination for African American troops. His only reservation concerned the number of GIs that the city could absorb since accommodations for black soldiers were limited to the Booker T. Washington Club.<sup>150</sup> The implication of the report was that African Americans were likely to be at least as well behaved as any troops in Sydney, but they were still to be segregated.

The report from Sydney paints a positive picture of African American conduct and civilian-black relations. Indeed, if we remember that the Queensland Police reports discussed above generally spoke of black conduct and wartime relation in good terms, it is probable that from a military and police perspective, the Sydney report was accurate. However, US authorities filed two reports concerning black conduct and wartime relations. The second report, written shortly after Getzoff completed his appraisal, dealt with black conduct and relations in Queensland; it was not entirely original because this report took into account several of the Colonel Getzoff's findings from Sydney.

---

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

In this second report, Major Richard J. Dixon, the assistant inspector general for the United States Army Services of Supply (USASOS), offered a less sanguine picture of African American conduct. The major first discounted some of Colonel Getzoff's observations and was particularly dismissive of Police Commissioner MacKay's general praise of black troops. He stressed some of the negative observations in the commissioner's account of black-civilian relations, such as the unwillingness of "reputable" citizens to fraternize with black GIs; the resentment that some residents held towards the presence of black servicemen; and the general bitterness some Sydney residents felt regarding relations between black GIs and white women. By downplaying the generally good conduct of black GIs and focusing on the disgruntlement of a minority of local residents, Dixon concluded, in contradiction to MacKay's report, that "[s]uch observations would indicate that the civil authorities of Sydney have encountered some problems in the control of negro soldiers."<sup>151</sup>

Not only did Dixon reject the conclusions of Commissioner MacKay but he inexplicably concluded that the "negro, as such, is unwelcome in Australia."<sup>152</sup> Perhaps drawing on Reverend Cowie's racist mutterings, Dixon concluded that at the heart of the antagonism towards blacks, was the White Australia Policy. Dixon believed that at the beginning of the American presence, black troops were welcomed and viewed as saviours from the Japanese. However, after the danger passed the "Australia White Policy [sic]

---

<sup>151</sup> Richard J. Dixon to Commanding General, USASOS, 16 April 1944, 07 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas, 6.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

was remembered and again became an active influence on public opinion.”<sup>153</sup> Dixon also argued that black troops were hard to control and needed constant supervision and tactful handling.<sup>154</sup> That the White Australia Policy did not apply to black troops, as they were visitors in the country and not immigrants, was lost on Dixon.

The reader may also wonder how Major Dixon came to conclusions that contradicted those of Colonel Getzoff. Informants either stationed in or living in Brisbane (US army officers, the US provost marshal, and Queensland Police) provided testimony that supported some of his findings. Dixon interviewed Deputy Chief of Staff J.C. Diller, who stated that black troops on leave “are less restrained in their conduct than white troops which results in frequent clashes with Australian citizens, crime, and further strain on American-Australian relations.”<sup>155</sup> As the Deputy Chief of Staff of the USASOS, Diller was in a good position to observe and learn about the conduct of black troops. Major Diller maintained that although Australian civilians tolerated black GIs cavorting with white women, white GIs hated to see it. He concluded that some communities “openly resent the presence of negroes [and] other communities tacitly resent their presence.”<sup>156</sup>

A questionnaire from Queensland’s Commissioner of Police was critical of the conduct and presence of black GIs. Without explaining why, Commissioner Carroll told Dixon that it would have been best if black GIs had never come to Queensland because of the White Australia Policy. Carroll also characterized the attitude of black GIs as one of

---

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>155</sup> “Statement by Major J.C. Diller,” NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas, 1.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 2.



“defiance” and complained “it is almost impossible for the State Police to enforce the civil laws in relation to coloured troops without the assistance of an adequate Provost staff.”<sup>157</sup> The commissioner also believed the initial warm welcome extended to blacks was due to the fear of a Japanese invasion in 1942. He likened this welcoming to the drowning man clutching at the proverbial straw. In his opinion, as long as the White Australia Policy had support in Queensland, the presence of black troops would be resented.<sup>158</sup>

A report from Lt. Colonel John V. Mueller, the provost marshal for the Brisbane area, reaffirmed Dillon and Carroll’s statements. Mueller maintained that the state police and the population disliked large numbers of blacks in the city. Practically the only whites who associated with African Americans, according to Mueller, were of the criminal element. Whatever good treatment black GIs received was due to their uniform and what they represented; in fact, many Australians secretly resented their presence. According to the colonel, the population did not accept black GIs, and African Americans only thought so because there were “many derelict women in the large cities who follow the coloured soldiers.”<sup>159</sup> There is little evidence that Mueller correctly perceived Australian public opinion given that Queensland Police reports indicate that many “respectable” people welcomed and defended the presence of black troops. Again, it is worth emphasizing that most complainants represented a vocal minority rather than the Australian public generally. Moreover, it is obvious that Mueller could not accept the

---

<sup>157</sup> C.J. Carroll to Major Richard J. Dixon, 25 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas, 1 & 2.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 & 3.

<sup>159</sup> John V. Mueller to Inspector General, 24 March 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 48, Box 992, File: 333.5 Investigation of the Conduct and Control of Negro Troops in Leave Areas, 1 & 2.

idea that black GIs might be welcomed simply because of their individual merits. It is important to remember that the US Provost Corps was particularly imbued with prejudice against black soldiers. Mueller and his fellow officers in charge of policing GIs conceptualized soldiers in terms of race, not as individuals from different regions, family background, and education. Mueller proceeded to criticize the general conduct of black troops; he argued (vaguely) that without strict supervision, black GIs would bring disgrace upon their country. As he enigmatically put it, “[c]onstant watch must be maintained to be able to beat the colored solders to the punch.”<sup>160</sup> Still, the provost marshal was forced to admit, in contradiction to his earlier statements, that black soldiers were no different from whites when it came to law and order and that they posed no unique problems regarding crime.<sup>161</sup> By focusing on isolated events and the shrill voices of a minority of vocal racists, Mueller weaved a yarn that painted African Americans in the worst possible light. One cannot dismiss the likelihood that, similar to most white Americans, Mueller was not particularly upset with the conduct of black troops, but rather that African Americans enjoyed hospitality or at least civility from most Australians. That some white Australian women were not afraid of the social stigma attached to miscegenation and dated African Americans anyway was salt in the wound.

Because of the skewed report with its poor appraisal of black conduct and the alleged Australian dissatisfaction over their presence, Major Dixon made several recommendations concerning African American GIs on leave. He believed Australia lacked the facilities to accommodate more black GIs, which forced him to conclude

---

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

without explanation, that more blacks would mean more violence. To avoid this, Dixon believed that black troops should return to the US on furlough, or if this was impossible, take leave somewhere other than Australia in the SWPA. Interestingly, the major added that white GIs should be included in this scheme so critics could not charge the military with discrimination:

the United States is confronted with a racial problem fraught with dangerous possibilities. Whatever leave policy is adopted in this theatre will be examined closely at home, both now and hereafter, for evidence of discrimination against the negro soldiers. A hue and cry will be raised and powerful influences will be brought to bear if our leave policy is not carefully drawn to avoid discrimination as far as possible.<sup>162</sup>

White authorities feared how their actions would be perceived back home. In any case, one of Dixon's recommendations was put into effect. Some black GIs still visited Australia, although Oro Bay, on New Guinea's northwest coast, was developed into a furlough area exclusively for black GIs in 1944.<sup>163</sup>

Regardless of the recommendation to limit the number of blacks on furlough, one may wonder how much credence can be placed on Dixon's account because it not only contradicted the Sydney report, but ignored other evidence of good relations. Virtually every civilian complaint originated from a vocal minority whose stories of black misconduct were either full of hyperbole or outright lies. When police investigated civilian protests, they invariably discovered that most community members had no problems with the presence of African Americans. Ultimately, at the heart of civilian complaints was disgruntlement over interracial associations and distaste of

---

<sup>162</sup> Dixon to Commanding General, USASOS, 16 April 1944, 13.

<sup>163</sup> Moore, *Oversexed, Overpaid, and Over Here*, 213.

miscegenation. In addition, police reports did not characterize civilians who fraternized with black GIs as unsavoury; in fact, sometimes the complainants themselves were described as hooligans. One must reiterate that racism permeated the Provost Corps, which cast in doubt Provost Marshal Mueller's observations. His observations were contradictory for he spoke in one breath about the rowdiness of black GIs but then stated that they posed no special problems with crime when compared to white troops. In the final analysis, Dixon's report exaggerated the poor behaviour of black GIs and civilian discontent over their presence. What Dixon's report and recommendations illustrate is not widespread Australian dissatisfaction over the black presence, but rather the anger and uneasiness among a few significant American officers over the good relations between these two groups.

### **Brawls and Riots: Black GIs and Australian Civilians**

Dixon's appraisal of Australian discontent was overblown and operated on the assumption of collective racial behaviour, but that criticism does not mean relations were universally harmonious or that the conduct of every black GI was faultless. As we shall see in the following chapter, some black GIs, like their white comrades, committed a variety of crimes against Australians. Missing from that discussion is an examination of brawls and riots that black servicemen participated in during their stay in Australia. These episodes belong in the current discussion. White GIs brawled with Australian servicemen but it appears that black soldiers were mixed up in violent encounters with Australian civilians and service personnel. These often took the form of riots. Furthermore, because

of the collective nature of this aggression, participants were rarely arrested. The episodes amounted to breakdowns in discipline. There were good reasons for this among black units. They were not immune from feelings of *esprit de corps* and national loyalty; indeed their status as an embattled minority within the US forces and American society probably heightened group identity and an instinct to stick together. When one member of a unit was seen in a confrontation with Australians, others joined in. Furthermore, one will recall that around three-quarters of black soldiers fell into the bottom two categories of the Army General Classification Tests (AGCT). In contrast to low scoring whites who could be spread out among many units, uneducated blacks were lumped together into all black units because of the army's segregationist policies. Furthermore, because of the humiliation of having to lead black troops, many of the officers commanding black units were the army's worst leaders. Some black units were inadequately trained, suffered from poor discipline, and disaffected with their auxiliary role during the war.<sup>164</sup>

An incident that occurred on 25 April 1942 illustrates the end result of army policy. Over 300 black servicemen arrived in Mt. Isa by train on their way to Darwin. Many men were granted leave on the night of their arrival and the behaviour of some GIs was deplorable, according to one police report. A taxi driver, while carrying a group of black GIs, had a knife pressed in his side, and fearing for his life jumped out of his moving car. Later in the evening, a group of soldiers gathered at a local theatre where their use of profane language upset local residents, according to Queensland Police. When Constable W.J. O'Shea asked one GI to stop swearing, the American punched him

---

<sup>164</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 317.

in the nose. Another constable named Corner objected to this and he too was attacked; in defence, he hit one GI on the head with the butt of his service revolver. Tensions escalated when an estimated thirty troops surrounded the two constables. Corner fired a shot in the air to disperse the GIs. This had the desired effect and with the crisis averted, Corner returned to the police station. O'Shea continued to patrol the area with another constable.<sup>165</sup>

Unfortunately for O'Shea and his colleague, the GIs were not finished; ten minutes later, the group returned and surrounded O'Shea and Constable V.A. Sternberg, demanding that they produce Constable Corner. The Americans wanted revenge on the constable because he had used his pistol butt on their comrade. According to the police report, "without any further parley they attacked the two Constables."<sup>166</sup> Seeing the GIs assail the policemen, Australian soldiers rushed to assist the constables, a few civilians joined in. The Australians eventually drove off the GIs.<sup>167</sup>

The police at Mt. Isa were shaken by the incident with the US servicemen. Several Australians suffered knife-related injuries and Constable Sternberg was seriously wounded. After the melee, the captain in charge of the soldiers rounded them up and forbade them from returning to town. The captain learned of the original assault on the taxi driver the following day. There is no further documentation regarding the brawl and no evidence that anyone was arrested. Nonetheless, relations began inauspiciously in Mt. Isa which was a key transit point between the east coast and "the Top End."<sup>168</sup>

---

<sup>165</sup> Sergeant No. 2359 to Inspector of Police, 26 April 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

Relations in the small Queensland town of Barcaldine began poorly in May 1942.

When a contingent of black GIs arrived, an American lieutenant asked the police stationed in the town not to supply his men with hard spirits. Every hotelkeeper in Barcaldine agreed to provide only beer, a limitation that angered young men who were wary of discriminatory treatment. The district's Inspector of Police, Charles Price, commented that black GIs "resent[ed] this restriction and trouble has developed."<sup>169</sup> On May 22, a group of drunken African Americans, apparently looking for trouble, complained about the ban on spirits to a local constable. When a resident told the GIs that anyone selling spirits would be arrested, one of the GIs threatened to kill him if he did not stop talking. According to the police report, more troops and civilians started to gather round and the GIs were "apparently looking for an opening to start a brawl."<sup>170</sup> One of the troops then proclaimed "[y]ou have run this town long enough, now it is our turn, from now on we will run it."<sup>171</sup> Fortunately, the black troops dispersed after a diplomatic intercession by the constable.<sup>172</sup>

Not all quarrels reached riot proportions; there were several examples in police records of small scuffles and random scraps between Australians and black GIs. In January 1943, Idaniel Hunt attacked James Finch seemingly at random outside a Brisbane hotel. Investigations revealed Hunt was very drunk and angry that no one would drink with him at the hotel's private bar. When passing Finch on the way to the lavatory, Hunt called the Australian "white trash." Hunt then asked some Marines at the bar if they had

---

<sup>169</sup> Charles H. Price to Commissioner of Police, 26 May 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

a knife and when they said no, he left the hotel and bought one. The black GI then waited outside and when Finch came out, he attacked him. Queensland Police arrested the American and concluded that the attack was random; Hunt was simply angry that no one would drink with him. He decided to assault the first person who left the hotel.<sup>173</sup>

In January 1943, constables patrolling South Brisbane came upon a brawl between black GIs and white civilians and witnessed a black serviceman preparing to stab a civilian in the back. Seeing the constables arrive, the GI stopped his attack. However, when the police tried to arrest him, thirty-five African American GIs surrounded the constables and threatened violence. The attacker fled while his comrades occupied the police; the constables eventually gave chase and arrested him.<sup>174</sup>

Police were called to a similar fracas in South Brisbane in July 1943. This inner city district had been essentially assigned to African American troops as their recreational region within the city, although other men could also attend the local bars and brothels. A brawl occurred between George Parker, a black soldier, and an Australian sailor at the Atlas Hotel. When police arrived, the sailor had already been taken to a local hospital with cuts on his nose and neck. Police concluded that a sharp weapon caused the wounds. Police inquiries revealed that the black soldier had ordered two beers with a friend but did not have enough money. Seeing this, a sailor, Bernard Erridge, told the soldiers they had only enough money for one beer. This remark incensed the Americans because they insulted the Australian and a fight broke out. One of the Americans

---

<sup>173</sup> C. Doggett to Inspector of Police, 13 January 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>174</sup> Constables 3684 and 3418 to Inspector of Police, 22 January 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.



attacked Erridge with the knife, and after wounding him, the GIs fled the bar.<sup>175</sup>

Queensland Police eventually tracked down one black soldier who denied he started the fight. However, he confessed that he and his friend were passing racist remarks about whites and Erridge threatened violence if they did not stop. According to Parker, he was then attacked without warning and used a knife in self-defence. Queensland Police arrested Parker after he confessed; they then handed him over to the US authorities.<sup>176</sup>

Another brawl between black soldiers and Australian civilians happened outside the Columboola Dance Hall, in September 1943. According to one version of events, some soldiers after leaving the dance accosted two Australians. Words were exchanged and in the fight that ensued, one GI slashed an Australian with a knife. As more Australians emptied out of the hall, the outnumbered GIs ran to their base. The man who was cut, Arthur Bidgood, claimed that the attack was completely unprovoked. The other Australian with Bidgood corroborated the story.<sup>177</sup>

Queensland Police Sergeant, S. Gorman later interviewed Sergeant Harold Stone, one of the soldiers who attended the dance, and learned that they asked for a refund because none of the women would dance with them. According to Stone, an Australian soldier outside the hall insisted they did not deserve a refund; heated words were exchanged. Despite the tension, Stone got his comrades to leave, but a group of angry whites followed them. One of the Australians allegedly said “[y]ou mob of bloody black bastards we will fix you,” which incited the civilians to attack the GIs.<sup>178</sup> Stone also

---

<sup>175</sup> Constable 3755 to the Officer in Charge, 09 July 1943, QSA, A/12035.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> S. Gorman to Inspector of Police, 28 September 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12035.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

admitted to fighting Bidgood, but denied attacking him with a knife; unsurprisingly several of Stone's comrades supported his version of events. Although Stone's comrades backed up his version, Sergeant Gorman believed the evidence supported the civilians' story. Ultimately, the matter was handed over to US authorities for investigation.<sup>179</sup>

Another example of violence between black Americans and Australians erupted on 18 July 1943 in Cairns. Seaman Leon Brown and a friend passed two Australians. One of them called Brown a "black bastard"<sup>180</sup> Brown attacked the two men with a knife and fled. Queensland Police found the American and arrested him. In keeping with the jurisdictional agreement, the police handed Brown over to American authorities.<sup>181</sup>

Given that some civilians did not like the idea of Australian women spending time with black GIs, it is not surprising that a few Australian men objected through violence. On 26 May 1945, three black sailors, while accompanying three white Australian women in Brisbane, came across a group of Australian soldiers. One of the Diggers remarked "[l]ook at those white women with the Niggers."<sup>182</sup> Infuriated by the slur, GI Logan Harris attacked the man with a knife and his shipmates joined in. After a few minutes of fighting the Americans fled, leaving two Australians with knife wounds. Queensland Police eventually tracked down Harris and arrested him for wounding the Australians.<sup>183</sup> In the court martial that followed, Harris was acquitted.<sup>184</sup>

---

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Detective Sergeant 2574 to Inspector of Police, 25 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> C.E. Risch to Criminal Investigation Branch Brisbane, 11 June 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> C.E. Risch to Criminal Investigation Branch Brisbane, 15 July 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12029.

On some occasions, black Americans came into conflict with civilians over access to prostitutes. In September 1944, a black sailor attacked Jock Quong in South Brisbane after Quong let him into his home. The sailor, Laurence Santos, had knocked at the door for several minutes because he wanted to see a well-known prostitute who stayed with Quong. Upon entering the house, Santos attacked Quong with a knife because Quong had denied the woman was there. Quong managed to arm himself with an axe and scare the American off, but suffered a stab wound in the chest. During their investigation, Queensland Police tracked down Santos, who claimed self-defence in the incident. According to him, Quong had attacked him with the axe first. The prostitute could not corroborate either story because she claimed she was asleep during much of the fight. Santos was handed over to the Americans and at his court martial, he was sentenced to two months imprisonment.<sup>185</sup>

These episodes share parallels with similar incidents during the American occupation of Britain. David Reynolds recounts episodes where black Americans rioted for want of discipline. Moreover, he notes that African Americans often reacted violently to slights and racial slurs both real and imagined, especially after the consumption of alcohol. He adds that many problems “caused by black GIs could have been ameliorated by commanders who were both firmer and more sensitive. But command of a black unit was widely regarded as a stigma and many blacks were under poor or inexperienced officers.”<sup>186</sup> Black Americans were responsible for their poor conduct and Australians sometimes goaded them into violence. Still, army policy that lumped all black troops

---

<sup>185</sup> L.R. Wex to CIB, 02 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12040.

<sup>186</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 318.

into the same units and burdened them with poor white officers led to poor discipline and misconduct in Australia and Great Britain.

## **Conclusion**

The experiences of black GIs while in Australia were complex. Relations between white and black GIs were poor and violence was an ever-present possibility. Fear on both sides was a constant feature of these relations; white officers dreaded the possibility of mutinies and black unrest generally, which meant that the morale of black units was a preoccupation in the SWPA. This concern over morale also existed in mainland America, which resulted in a War Department directive that ordered commanders to improve their treatment of black units. In the Australian context, some officials removed overt racists because they feared poor treatment could result in black unrest or low morale. As well, a few prescient officers understood that race relations in the military were being scrutinized by black leaders and white liberals at home. The concern over black morale, which was exacerbated because of manpower concerns, also meant that black troops, despite segregationist policies put in place in Australia, were afforded a degree of freedom in the country which translated into a great deal of interaction with white Australians.

It is possible to come to some conclusions regarding relations between black servicemen and Australian civilians. Black GIs conducted themselves as well as white troops and even American provost marshals had to admit that black GIs posed no unique problems with regard to crime. Surprisingly, given Australia's history of Aboriginal

subjugation and control, notions of white superiority, and an immigration policy that kept out non-Europeans, civilians treated black GIs surprisingly well for a variety of reasons. Blacks were regarded as saviours; Australian racism like in Britain was largely in the abstract; given their appearance and comportment, it was difficult to classify African Americans as inferior; and most importantly, the presence of black Americans was not an abrogation of the country's White Australia Policy. African Americans were visitors who would leave the country after the war ended.

Nevertheless, despite good relations some Australian communities contained vocal minorities that wanted nothing to do with black GIs and did not want others – especially women – to consort with them. This minority, which often complained to government authorities, would not be happy until black troops left the country. Typically, complaints over black misconduct were exaggerated or spurious. What they represented was anger over interracial mingling, especially sexual relations between white women and black GIs. Australia had a long history of trying to stamp out miscegenation between whites and Aboriginals and laws were still on the books that forbade such associations. This mentality carried over to relations with African Americans along with irrational fears over race polluting and sexually voracious black males. Reynolds notes a similar mentality in Britain during the American occupation there. Blacks were warmly received, although many Britons drew the line at miscegenation which “rested on the prevailing social Darwinist stereotypes about distinct races of differing attributes and qualities.”<sup>187</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 307.

Finally, relations were for the most part amiable, but they were not perfectly peaceful. Like associations between white GIs and Diggers, interracial relations sometimes took an ugly turn. Black units, imbued with group loyalty, saddled with inferior officers, and laden heavily with the uneducated and socially unadjusted sometimes suffered from poor discipline. On several occasions, black units ran amuck in Australian towns or engaged civilians and constables in brawls. African Americans, feeling they were the victims of slights, often started fights; however, the presence of alcohol was a contributing factor to many of these incidents. As we shall see in the next chapter, fights and riots were not the only example of poor behaviour among black troops. Along with many of their white countrymen, some were responsible for a series of offences that contemporaries likened to a crime wave.

## **CHAPTER FIVE – PROTECTING ONE’S OWN: CRIME, MANPOWER, AND AMERICAN PRESUMPTION**

With tens of thousands of American servicemen living in Australia for months and hundreds of thousands more visiting on furlough or passing through in transit, criminal offences by Americans against Australian civilians were inevitable. GIs committed all manner of crimes during the occupation, from murder and rape to vandalism and motor theft. As the American presence increased, so did the number of arrests; in Brisbane alone 140 military personnel were arrested in June 1942. In July, the number of arrests increased to 796 and to 1128 in October. When the number of American personnel stationed in Australia peaked in 1943, the US provost marshal for Base Section Three likened the number of stabbings, assaults, and violence in Brisbane to a “crime wave.”<sup>1</sup>

Such observations might have been more a matter of perception than reality. Statistics from the Queensland State Police indicate that there were a third fewer crimes in Brisbane during 1943 than there were in 1939. However, data point to an upsurge in sexual offences in Queensland during the war and here American personnel were partially responsible. In 1942, of the seventy-one men charged with rape and statutory rape in Queensland, twenty-eight were US servicemen. A year later, GIs were responsible for twenty-three of the 287 sex crimes in the state. What appears to have differentiated the American offenders from the Australians was that many of the former were having

---

<sup>1</sup> Darryl McIntyre, “Paragons of Glamour: A Study of U.S. Military Forces in Australia” (PhD dissertation., University of Queensland, 1989), 249; *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 22 October 1944.

sex with under-age girls. Common assaults throughout Australia actually went down during the war.<sup>2</sup> Even if the question of a crime wave is open-ended, one cannot discount that some Australians believed that it existed. Its mention in the press likely reflected widely held assumptions. One should keep in mind that not all crimes were reported; police did not always press charges. As well, the numbers from 1943 only refer to major crimes. Destruction of property, theft, and petty offences do not factor into the data and many police reports concern American criminal behaviour stemming from property damage. Finally, we shall see that evidence indicates that some cases of statutory rape were not reported as crimes in one base section.

Even if GI offences fell short of a crime wave, there is no doubt that GIs committed hundreds of crimes. Although only a small minority of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who passed through Australia were guilty of misconduct, the criminal behaviour of the few nevertheless strained relations between Australian civilians and US personnel. Evidence indicates the more notorious American crimes angered Australians. Consequently, US officialdom worried that these crimes would damage wartime relations. Where there is little evidence concerning how Australians reacted to American misdeeds, we can surmise that crimes like murder, rape, and theft, being universal wrongs, could only have a negative impact on wartime relations. How else could Australians react if they were the victims of crime or learned about offences against their countrymen? Victims of minor American crimes like vandalism, destruction of

---

<sup>2</sup> Michael Sturma, , "Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942-1945," *Journal of Australian Studies* 24 (May 1989): 5; E. Daniel and Annett Potts, *Yanks Down Under: The American Impact on Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 231.



property, and the use of obscene language were detrimentally affected or offended by such acts and bound to think that without the Americans their lives would have been undisturbed. After the fear of a Japanese invasion subsided in 1942, these sentiments probably increased. Here it might be useful to return to Gwynne Dyer's statement about group loyalty as it helps explain why American crime would hurt relations. Dyer states that "the dominant trend in the history (and prehistory) of human culture has been the creation of larger and larger groups within which each member is defined as "one of us": a kinsmen, a fellow tribesman, a fellow citizen."<sup>3</sup> Whereas Australians committing crimes against other Australians could be dismissed as a social ill or ignored altogether because they were inside the group, GIs were outside the group. American military personnel identified by their uniforms and accents were an easy target for complaints. Their crimes were open to greater scrutiny.

African American troops were even more vulnerable. Unlike white GIs, whose misdeeds were hardly mentioned in the press, there were stories of crimes by African Americans in Australian papers. Partly because of this coverage, there is evidence that some Australians resented their presence or at least the stories fed their prejudices. These offences also bring the question of justice to the fore. Did racism within the military, especially among the military police, mean black GIs could expect certain injustice when charged with criminal acts? Some historians have tackled this issue and found systemic injustice. However, somewhat contrary to the historiographical consensus, it will be argued here, that black servicemen sometimes were treated justly.

---

<sup>3</sup> Gwynne Dyer, *War* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1985), 6.

US policy when it came to punishing crime in Australia is also a subject of this chapter. As a rule, notorious crimes such as murders and rapes were given a high profile in the press (with the connivance of US officials) and the accused in these high profile cases were usually punished severely. Firm and well publicized punishments placated an Australian public that wanted to see justice served. The punishments were also intended to send a message to other GIs. When it came to less notorious crimes, US military authorities often spirited the offender out of the country and refused to divulge his location to Australian police. Queensland constables observed that when police made inquiries about American misconduct GIs were transferred from their units and US officials refused to provide their locations.<sup>4</sup> War Department policy demanded a maximization of manpower which meant that GIs often escaped punishment for minor (and a few major) crimes in Australia. They were reassigned, and in the name of wartime secrecy, their new location was not made available to curious Australian police officials. These practices created resentment among the state police and public alike because they could appear to be merely thin cover for protecting one's own boys. A sense of justice required transparency and that was what military officials effectively resisted.

Before we examine American offences, it may be useful to discuss the reasons Americans committed crime during their stays in Australia. Beyond their personal motives (which are sometimes indiscernible), American offenders were often indifferent to the consequences of their actions. One reason for this indifference might have been the knowledge that officers were definitely instructed to mete out severe punishment only

---

<sup>4</sup> Constable E.J. Breene to Inspector of Police, 21 April 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

in extreme cases. Another factor is the link between high time preference and crime.

Political scientist and sociologist Edward C. Banfield makes such a connection in his book *The Unheavenly City Revisited*:

The threat of punishment at the hands of the law is unlikely to deter the present-oriented person. The gains that he expects from the illegal act are very near to the present, whereas the punishment that he would suffer — in the unlikely event of his being both caught and punished — lies in a future too distant for him to take into account.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, economist and political philosopher Hans-Hermann Hoppe, in his study

*Democracy — The God that Failed*, argues

[w]hile high time preference is by no means equivalent with crime...a systematic relationship between them still exists, for in order to earn a market income a certain minimum of planning, patience, and sacrifice is required: one must first work for a while before one gets paid. In contrast, specific criminal activities such as murder, assault, rape, robbery, theft, and burglary require no such discipline: the reward for the aggressor is tangible and immediate, but the sacrifice — possible punishment — lies in the future and is uncertain.<sup>6</sup>

Add that the possibility of death increased during war and it is likely that many offenders — overwhelmingly young men — gave little thought to consequences beyond the thrill of the moment. How concerned could soldiers be about punishment if they might be dead in a month? It is also important to reiterate that most GIs in Australia were conscripts. By their very nature, they had little control over their lives. They had been dragooned into the services against their will and every material need was provided for. What this meant was a further diminution of personal responsibility and concern over the consequences of misbehaviour.

---

<sup>5</sup> Edward C. Banfield, *The Unheavenly City Revisited* (Boston: Little Brown, 1974), 140-41.

<sup>6</sup> Hans-Herman Hoppe, *Democracy, the God that Failed: The Economics and Politics of Monarchy, Democracy, and Natural Order* (New Brunswick: New Jersey, Transaction Publishers, 2001), 31.

Others have also observed the connection between army life and the erosion of personal responsibility. Two sociologists noted in 1946 that

[o]ver any period of time the dull, do-nothing routine stimulated escape reactions which, in decreasing order of frequency, were movies, gambling, liquor, and brothels. The complete exhaustion of the monthly paycheck within a few days was comparatively common. A soldier could squander his cash with equanimity, knowing that next month would see him “flush” again; while, in the meantime, there was always the assurance of food and shelter.<sup>7</sup>

Army life, with its boredom, monotony, risk of death, and “nanny state” trappings increased time preference and diminished personal responsibility. As war correspondent Ernie Pyle observed, a “soldier loses his sense of property. Nothing is sacred to him. In civilian life you’d call it stealing, but over there it’s the way they do.”<sup>8</sup> Walter Luszki, an officer with the 738<sup>th</sup> Police Battalion, observed high time preference brought on by war, albeit in the context of sexual mores. In his book, *A Rape of Justice: MacArthur and the New Guinea Hangings*, Luszki explains that once he reached Brisbane, all of the battalion’s officers, including a committed family man, began “shacking up” with Australian women. According to Luszki, “an important reason for this behaviour was the ever present nearness of death and the feeling that one might as well live it up while he could because time was short.”<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Ingraham and Frederick Manning, “American Military Psychiatry,” in Richard A. Gabriel, ed., *Military Psychiatry: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986) 58-59, quoted in David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain 1942-1945* (London: Phoenix Press, 1996), 78.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Miller, *Situation Normal* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1944), 172, quoted in Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 78.

<sup>9</sup> Walter A. Luszki, *A Rape of Justice: MacArthur and the New Guinea Hangings* (Madison Books: Lanham, Maryland, 1991), 90.

## **Petty Crimes, Thefts, and Robberies**

The criminal conduct of US servicemen has received relatively little examination. Historians have examined the criminal conduct of black GIs, for example, but essentially within the context of the injustices US authorities occasionally heaped on black servicemen. Potts and Potts devote a chapter to crime, but much of it deals with Australian offences against American personnel. They provide a few accounts of Australian civilians robbing and assaulting American servicemen, but the chapter reveals that most Australian “crimes” were things like price gouging, black market dealings, and traffic accidents.<sup>10</sup> Darryl McIntyre offers some information on crime in his dissertation on the American occupation but he downplays this facet of the American presence. He writes that, save for a few notorious murders, “various serious sexual offences, and the rather affectionate behaviour in public between American servicemen and Australian women, the United States troops behaved well and with consideration.”<sup>11</sup>

We must look beyond the notorious when examining the criminal misconduct of US servicemen if we are to have a sound understanding of American crime in Australia. Less serious and mundane offences, many of them property crimes, received virtually no press attention; however, they affected relations if only as a nuisance for all concerned. Moreover, many of the accounts examined below offer a human dimension that cannot be related through statistics. Not only do they highlight national antagonisms, but they give

---

<sup>10</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, chap. 13.

<sup>11</sup> McIntyre, *Paragons of Glamour*, 288.

some credence to Jessie Street's observation that some Americans simply did not care about Australia or its people. Australians were "natives" and were treated as such.<sup>12</sup>

One commonplace crime committed by GIs during the war was the wilful destruction of property. There is a parallel here to 1941 Britain where vandalism and destruction of property was a major problem, primarily due to the misconduct of Canadian troops.<sup>13</sup> These misdemeanours were common; below are but a few of the examples drawn from the Queensland Police files. In October 1942, a Queensland Police constable suspected that an American GI had destroyed a Brisbane shop front window but could only speculate on his motive, "[p]erhaps he may have been knocking on the door and not receiving a reply, may have kicked in the window pane."<sup>14</sup> Police arrested the soldier after he crashed an army truck only a hundred yards from the shop. Because there were no witnesses and his companions denied all allegations, Queensland Police chose not to charge the GI.<sup>15</sup> A similar incident took place in 1944 in Fortitude Valley when three US sailors destroyed a series of shop windows. When Queensland Police questioned these men, they admitted their crime and told their interrogator that "they were leaving Port next morning, and after they had consumed a quantity of liquor, they decided that they would have some fun and so broke the windows."<sup>16</sup> Here we see direct link between high time preference brought on by war and property crime. In October 1944, Police Sergeant A. Brown witnessed an American sailor smash a plate glass

---

<sup>12</sup> Jessie M.G. Street, *Truth or Repose* (Sydney: Australian Book Society, 1966), 225.

<sup>13</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 122.

<sup>14</sup> J.G. Strophair to Inspector of Police, 16 December 1942, QSA, Police File, A/12035.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> "Three American Sailors, Jerome Marvin Leissner, Allen Hamed and Albert J. Black, Wilful Destruction of Property," 19 March 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12035.

window in Brisbane and immediately apprehended the man. When asked why he committed such a senseless act, the American replied “I cannot help it if the window jumps at me when I am passing it.”<sup>17</sup>

Telephone booths were a popular target for American vandalism. In August 1944, a Queensland detective sergeant caught two American sailors destroying a telephone cabinet in Brisbane.<sup>18</sup> The same month, an off duty Australian MP came across two American sailors destroying a phone booth in the city. The MP tried to call state police from the still functioning phone. The sailors then threatened the MP with a knife and it was only after the timely arrival of a US shore patrol that the confrontation was defused and the sailors taken away.<sup>19</sup> In the same month, Queensland Police arrested a US sailor in Tully for destroying a phone cabinet. After being charged, the man was handed over to US authorities; he was punished with twenty-five hours of extra duty, and confinement to his ship.<sup>20</sup>

Other petty offences for which American servicemen were often arrested included the use of obscene language and urinating in public. On 10 September 1942, Constable A. Kirby arrested an American soldier for urinating on a public street. The constable justified his arrest by noting that “there was a number of women and children in the nearby vicinity, and the private part of the offender could have been quite easily seen by them.”<sup>21</sup> In some cases, the obscenities of US servicemen illustrated undercurrents of friction between Americans and state police and the contempt that a few young men, far

---

<sup>17</sup> A. Brown to CIB Brisbane, 19 October 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12035.

<sup>18</sup> Detective Constable Buchanan to CIB Brisbane, 15 August 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12035.

<sup>19</sup> Alan James Meredith, “Statement,” 14 August 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12035.

<sup>20</sup> R.J. Mullally to Commissioner of Police, 06 September 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12035.

<sup>21</sup> A. Kirby to Sub-Inspector of Police, 10 September 1942, QSA, Police File, A/12031.

from home, showed toward the representatives of law and order in another country. For instance, a Queensland Police constable in Townsville arrested an American staff sergeant for calling him a “bloody flat foot.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in March 1943, Constable M.J. Power came across an American soldier who told him that back home, policemen were kept in their place. When told that he would have to behave himself while in Brisbane, the GI exploded “Oh, fuck Australia.”<sup>23</sup> On another occasion, Queensland Police observed an American sergeant swearing and misbehaving in Brisbane; when the American noticed he was under surveillance, he cried out “[y]ou fucking cock suckers of Australians you are all the same.”<sup>24</sup> Constable V.D. Heffernan immediately arrested the man.<sup>25</sup> In April 1943, Constable J. Kelly caught an American soldier urinating in the doorway of a Rockhampton café; when told he was under arrest, the GI told the constable that “I will have a piss where I fuckin’ well like.”<sup>26</sup> In accordance with the National Security Relations (NSR) discussed in chapter one, the soldier was arrested and handed over to US authorities. Queensland Police never ascertained if the American was ever charged or court-martialled.<sup>27</sup> That was a common outcome.

The use of obscene language occasionally escalated into violent confrontations between state police and American servicemen. After warning a group of drunken sailors on leave in Brisbane to stop swearing and misbehaving, Queensland Constable J.

---

<sup>22</sup> “Staff Sergeant Harold Axt, US Army Air Force, Arrested 07 January 1943,” 09 January 1943, QSA, Police File, A/12031.

<sup>23</sup> M. J. Power to Licensing Inspector, 07 March 1943, QSA, Police File, A/12031.

<sup>24</sup> V.D. Heffernan to Inspector of Police, 03 June 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12031.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> J. Kelly to Inspector of Police, 16 April 1943, QSA, Police File, A/12031.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



Rawlings was told to “[g]o Fuck yourself.”<sup>28</sup> When Rawlings tried to arrest the rating who insulted him, other sailors assisted their mate and attacked the constable.

Fortunately, for the Australian, two more policemen arrived on the scene and all the sailors were arrested.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Sergeant S.V. Noouau found himself in a violent struggle in May 1944 when he tried to arrest a US serviceman for obscene language in Brisbane. Trouble began when the sergeant came upon two GIs who were trying to find a lost lockbox. After a brief search, Noouau found the box at a local pub and told one of the GIs where it was. Unfortunately, the other GI was drunk and agitated over the lost box, unwilling to listen to the constable, and swearing loudly. The GI’s behaviour prompted a caution from Noouau, which only infuriated the American. He unleashed a torrent of obscenities on the sergeant, which resulted in his arrest.<sup>30</sup>

Crime statistics dealing with American crimes in Australia are scarce and the data that do survive have complications. One US Criminal Investigation Section memorandum stated that there were 227 cases of larceny in an eight-month period starting in August 1943.<sup>31</sup> This memorandum included the whole Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA); however, it suggests that Australians were the victims of scores of crimes during this short period. This report encompassed a period when the American presence in Australia was declining; likely, the number of larcenies at other times was greater. The Queensland Police files contain abundant reports concerning American theft, which compliment the scanty data on larceny. Based on these files, a lot of thefts were

---

<sup>28</sup> J. Rawlings to Licensing Inspector, 16 September 1943, QSA, Police File, A/12031.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> S.V. Noouau to Inspector of Police, 23 May 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12031.

<sup>31</sup> Criminal Investigation Section to Lt. Col. J.P. Holland, 10 April 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1287, File: Investigations Criminal.

impulsive and involved vehicles. US servicemen stole everything with wheels: cars, army trucks, jeeps, and even bikes. The intention was not to sell them, these were not planned or professional thefts. Laziness, boredom, and thrill seeking were the chief motives.

Even state police were not immune from the loss of property at the hands of Americans. In November 1943, Queensland Police heard a commotion outside their station in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley. When they went outside to investigate, they found three American sailors trying to make off with a police motorcycle. Unable to start the bike, the Americans fled on foot. Two were caught after a short chase. The sailors resisted violently, but police managed to subdue them and hand them over to US military authorities.<sup>32</sup>

In March 1944, three American soldiers stole at gunpoint the car of Rockhampton resident Collin Weaver and took his money. Queensland Police arrested the offenders and handed them over to US military authorities.<sup>33</sup> Queensland Police did not report a motive for the theft, but it is probable the Americans simply wanted a car to drive around the town. In July 1945, an American sailor, caught trying to hot wire a Dutch army jeep, told the arresting constable "I only wanted to take the thing back as far as my ship."<sup>34</sup> After the sailor appeared before a Brisbane magistrate, American authorities took the man into custody.<sup>35</sup>

Bicycles were not safe from Americans. In December 1943, an American private rode off with a boy's bike in Ipswich. He would not give it back even when the boy

---

<sup>32</sup> Constable No. 3384 to Inspector of Police, 12 November 1943, QSA, Police File, A/12034.

<sup>33</sup> "Criminal Offence," 21 March 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12034.

<sup>34</sup> E.L. McCarthy to Inspector of Police, 19 July 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

caught him making his getaway. The victim flagged down a constable, who arrested the American and handed him over to US authorities.<sup>36</sup> Robert Warrick Hopkinson, an American merchant seaman, stole the bicycle of a Cairns resident in May 1944. A Queensland constable stopped the sailor when he witnessed him riding through the town. Although he claimed he had rented the vehicle, the bicycle's owner stated he had stolen it. US military authorities agreed and fined the American twenty-five dollars in lieu of two months imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> An American staff sergeant stole a bicycle and after crashing it into a taxi cab, confessed to Queensland Police that "[h]e took the bicycle with the intention of riding it to his Camp and then to ride it about the Camp."<sup>38</sup> Queensland Police later learned that the sergeant was confined to camp for four days as punishment for his crime.<sup>39</sup>

One common denominator in most of these crimes was the lenient punishments many offenders received. Queensland Police files reveal that most lawbreakers were given a fine, a few days confinement or no punishment at all.<sup>40</sup> One could argue that the American authorities made the punishment fit the crime, although the victims and the state police may not have agreed. State police often petitioned the US military authorities for several months, requesting information on the punishment of offenders, only to be told that no information would be forthcoming or that the accused had left the country. Constable J.A. Ferguson reported that, because Salvador M. Robles had left the country,

---

<sup>36</sup> Constable no. 3577 to Inspector of Police, 15 December 1943, QSA, Police File, A/12034.

<sup>37</sup> Constable No. 3992 to Inspector of Police, 08 May 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>38</sup> Constable No. 3340 to Licensing Inspector, 18 August 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>39</sup> G.W. Blanckensee to Inspector of Police, 28 August 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>40</sup> G.W. Blanckensee to Inspector of Police, 28 August 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030; Constable No. 3992 to Inspector of Police, 08 May 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

the police would probably never know what punishment, if any, he received for trying to steal a motor vehicle.<sup>41</sup> US authorities told Constable Ivan V. Clark that there would be no further action taken against an American serviceman who stole a truck because the offender had left the country.<sup>42</sup> By constantly asking for information, Queensland Police conveyed their frustration; requests were also a subtle way to notify the Americans that they suspected leniency and disapproved.

The theft of vehicles and destruction of property undermine McIntyre's contention that American troops "behaved well and with consideration." US servicemen stole more than just vehicles. The sheer size of the American presence in Australia meant that a few habitual or professional criminals entered the country. Police arrested American soldier Arthur Schaffler for stealing a diamond ring from a Brisbane jeweller in October 1942. American authorities took the GI into custody; however, they released Schaffler shortly thereafter because Queensland Police arrested him again for stealing from several city merchants. Because of his recidivism, Schaffler was uncharacteristically discharged from the service and sentenced to eight years of hard labour.<sup>43</sup> The episode intimates that American authorities were sometimes unduly lenient in their treatment of servicemen who committed criminal offences against Australian civilians. However, in the case of a repeat offender, the military justice system had to demonstrate more than usual resolve. This not only discouraged those in the ranks from robbing civilians, but it also conveyed to Australian authorities, who were suspicious of

---

<sup>41</sup> J.A. Ferguson to Officer in Charge, 08 December 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>42</sup> Ivan V. Clark to Officer in Charge, 04 May 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>43</sup> M.D. Brown to Inspector of Police, 15 January 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

American leniency, that the US military was prepared to punish criminals severely. In the spring of 1943, Private Bernard Michael Biskup was similarly sentenced to five years imprisonment for stealing from an Australian Digger at a Brisbane club.<sup>44</sup> The GI was AWOL and had stolen a watch, camera, and fountain pen from the Digger; he also admitted to stealing money from other Australia citizens.<sup>45</sup>

Americans committed several burglaries which indicate that with their presence came crime. The Criminal Investigation Section memorandum, mentioned above, recorded thirty cases of burglary in an eight-month period in the SWPA.<sup>46</sup> Here too, Queensland Police reports compliment these statistics. US serviceman William Cooper was jailed in Australia after he burgled ten Brisbane residences in 1943. A true recidivist, when he was released on bond in 1945, Cooper burgled another Brisbane residence and stole over one thousand pounds.<sup>47</sup> Police eventually arrested the American again, but he later escaped from captivity, after which there is no record of him. Similarly, a pair of American GIs was responsible for two burglaries in South Brisbane in the fall of 1943. The men were captured by Queensland Police and upon questioning, admitted their offences.<sup>48</sup> American authorities never court-martialled the soldiers for their crimes because, in what was a common story and US policy, they left Australia for New Guinea shortly after they were taken into custody.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> B. McNicholl to Officer in Charge, 07 April 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>45</sup> B. McNicholl to Officer in Charge, 30 December 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>46</sup> Criminal Investigation Section to Lt. Col. J.P. Holland, 10 April 1944, NA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1287, File: Investigations Criminal.

<sup>47</sup> N.A. White to Officer in Charge, 01 February 1946, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>48</sup> Constable 2912 to Commissioner of Police, 15 December 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>49</sup> Constable J.P. Frederiksen to Inspector of Police, 21 April 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

Robbery – theft involving force or threat of violence – was another common crime that American soldiers perpetrated; in eight months starting in August 1943, there were fifty-four such offences.<sup>50</sup> Here too AWOL soldiers loomed large. In April 1943 AWOL GI, Albert Morales robbed a Brisbane woman of ninety-one pounds while she was staying at one of the city's hotels. Under questioning, the soldier admitted to the crimes and told Queensland Police that he had a record of violence before coming to Australia.<sup>51</sup> Morales was not court-martialled because he “developed” insanity before his trial and was shipped back to the US.<sup>52</sup> In September 1943, two Americans conspired to rob a Brisbane man. They plied their victim with drink and lured him to a dark alley with promises of cheap cigarettes. The Americans then attacked the man and robbed him of one hundred pounds. Queensland Police arrested a man whom they thought was one of the assailants after some investigating; however, he was eventually acquitted. The civilian detective who carried out the investigation was not called at the court-martial.<sup>53</sup> On 13 March 1944, four American soldiers robbed a Rockhampton man at gunpoint after the Australian had given them a ride in his car. Queensland Police eventually tracked down the Americans and three of them were given ten year jail terms with hard labour. The fourth man was not charged because US authorities concluded he played no part in the crime.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Criminal Investigation Section to Lt. Col. J.P. Holland, 10 April 1944, NA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1287, File: Investigations Criminal.

<sup>51</sup> S.Kerr to Officer in Charge, 07 May 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>52</sup> S.Kerr to Officer in Charge, 24 September 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>53</sup> S.J. Mahony to Officer in Charge, 04 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>54</sup> J. Cashel to Inspector of Police, 21 March 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

The state police may not have liked it, but the American military practiced discretionary justice that distinguished between forgivable and unforgivable crimes. They may also have practiced discretion respecting individuals, and released men with no prior record. Wartime exigencies probably widened the definition of forgivable categories. In any event, Australians - and especially police officers - who encountered the incidents suspected favouritism. The state police surely shook their heads disapprovingly. There were indeed cases when a serious crime led to an arrest and ultimately an acquittal; the state police officers felt that American leniency had undermined their good work. American GI Leslie Earle Thomas allegedly stole nearly two hundred pounds from a Brisbane woman he met on a night out. The American noticed the woman **was** carrying a large wad of money in her purse and after spending a night with her, stole the money and disappeared. Thomas was picked up a couple of days later; when police produced the complainant, the American admitted he took the money.<sup>55</sup> US military authorities took the soldier into custody and court-martialled him; however, he was acquitted. According to the state police, the prosecution botched its case because the “only evidence called for the prosecution was that of the complainant.”<sup>56</sup> This was not the only instance when state police criticized the US military’s unwillingness to use their evidence and witnesses. Whether the American prosecution was merely inept or whether it backed off at times to maintain manpower, the reported and unreported results of courts martial provoked a few constables to exact their own

---

<sup>55</sup> S.C. Phillips to Officer in Charge, 28 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>56</sup> S.C. Phillips to Officer in Charge, 09 March 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

brand of rough justice before the seemingly tender mercies of the Americans came into play. Police distrust of American military justice was an irresolvable problem.

AWOL soldiers were often responsible for thefts because unless they found help from sympathetic Australian civilians, stealing was their only financial means. American soldiers Linwood Julian Wiedman and Charles Thomas Frazier went on a crime spree in the spring of 1943, stealing from Brisbane residents, Diggers, and other GIs. The Americans stole cash, a camera, and clothes before the American MPs caught up with them.<sup>57</sup> Herman Leonard Sullivan, another AWOL American, went on a three-day crime spree in March 1944. He stole from four Australians before state police arrested him. Sullivan admitted to his misdeeds and still had most of the stolen property in his possession; he was handed over to the US authorities.<sup>58</sup> In early August 1944, three army deserters broke into two Brisbane shops and stole clothes that they later pawned in the city. These men were eventually caught and handed over to American authorities but were sent to New Guinea shortly thereafter. US authorities refused to furnish Queensland Police with any information regarding the malefactors' punishment.<sup>59</sup>

## **Assaults**

Statistics may point to a reduction in assaults in Australia during the war; however, in Queensland, American assaults against Australians were common. Files of the Queensland State Police are replete with reports of American misconduct. In August

---

<sup>57</sup> "Relative to: Two United States Soldiers named Linwood Julian Wiedman and Charles Thomas Frazier," 02 September 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>58</sup> M.J. Clark to Officer in Charge, 31 March 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030; M.J. Clark to Officer in Charge, 12 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>59</sup> Constable 3583 to Officer in Charge, 12 September 1944 QSA, Police Files, A/12030.



1942, a drunken soldier attacked a Rockhampton man because he thought the Australian was interfering with his advances towards a local woman. Other Americans joined the fray. Police eventually arrived on the scene and arrested three Americans. They were charged in Police Court and handed over to the US military authorities.<sup>60</sup> In October 1943, a Brisbane publican tired of US sailor Bernard Charles Kirkland's drunkenness and ribald behaviour, asked the American to leave her pub. Kirkland pistol-whipped the woman instead. Several bar patrons rushed the attacker, but Kirkland threatened them all with the pistol. After fleeing the bar, Kirkland was followed by an Australian private who flagged down a police constable. Together they arrested Kirkland.<sup>61</sup>

Kirkland was one of many US servicemen who resorted to violence while under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol was a common denominator in many cases of assault. Booze was part of the GI's ration and when that was exhausted there was always the black market or Australian pubs that were happy to serve US personnel.<sup>62</sup> The Americans sometimes angered Australian civilians when they drained pubs dry or bid up prices.<sup>63</sup> Similar to relatively high pay, supplying GIs with booze was a conscious policy designed to keep up morale but alcohol also helped fuel brawls. In February 1944, an American private threatened to stab an Australian civilian outside a Brisbane hotel. The American had been drinking for most of the day. When the hotel bar closed, he tried to buy liquor from civilians. With promises that they would return with hard spirits, the

---

<sup>60</sup> Constable 3267 to Inspector of Police, 07 August 1942, QSA, Police File, A/12034.

<sup>61</sup> C.J. Carroll to the District Finance Officer, 05 November 1943, QSA, Police File, A/12034.

<sup>62</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 145.

<sup>63</sup> Premier's Private Secretary to Premier [Queensland], 10 January 1944, QSA, Justice Department, JUS/97; C.J. Whiting, Townsville Secretary of Australian Labor Party to F.A. Cooper, Premier, 10 February 1944, QSA, Premier's Papers, A/6435.

American naively gave the Australians his money, but they did not return. So just as predictably, the soldier went looking for them. Drunk and belligerent, the private mistook a hapless passer-by for one of the Australians who had taken his money and threatened him with a knife. Luckily, the American made no attack and did not pursue the man when he fled. One of the Australians who had taken the money actually returned to the bar and found the private; he explained to the GI that he could not find any alcohol and the other man absconded with the cash. Shortly thereafter, Queensland Police arrived and arrested both men.<sup>64</sup> The American left Australia for duty somewhere in the Pacific theatre shortly after the incident.<sup>65</sup>

From time to time, women were the targets of American assaults. Queensland Police arrested an American lieutenant in December 1944 for a series of assaults over a seventh month period in Brisbane. The American's modus operandi was usually the same: he would spring from an army staff car or jeep, throw the woman to the ground, and flee when the victim screamed. In his penultimate assault, the lieutenant punched his victim when she bit his hand. He did worse to his final victim, punching her without any provocation whatever. Police found the lieutenant after the final assault and although one of his victims positively identified him, the court martial handed down an acquittal. Indicative of police frustration and the instinct among American officials to protect their own men, Constable H.R. Cranney reported that Queensland Police were not asked to

---

<sup>64</sup> H.W. Bauer to CIB Brisbane, 02 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>65</sup> H.W. Bauer to CIB Brisbane, 01 May 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

testify at the court martial. Neither were several girls who had witnessed the lieutenant's suspicious actions on other occasions.<sup>66</sup>

There are other examples of military authorities allowing criminals to escape punishment after assaulting Australian women. In June 1945, Detective Sergeant T.H. Codd was ordered to investigate a disturbance at a South Brisbane brothel; when he arrived on the scene, he witnessed a Filipino merchant seaman attacking a prostitute with a knife. Other customers had restrained the seaman. After some inquiries, Codd learned that the sailor had earlier accused the woman of theft. The prostitute had denied the accusation, but this did not stop the sailor from choking and biting her. After breaking free of her attacker, she ran from the brothel for help and found a black GI who accompanied her back to the scene of the attack. Seeing the prostitute return, the Filipino brandished his knife and attacked again; it was at this point that Codd arrived. The policeman searched the sailor, found the money in his possession, and arrested him for assault.<sup>67</sup> DS Codd learned US authorities did not take any action against the sailor because the victim was a prostitute. The sailor was subsequently released from custody and placed on a ship leaving Australia.<sup>68</sup>

In the same month, two American sailors were arrested for attacking a tramway driver and a conductress. The Queensland detective sergeant who conducted the investigation noted that both assailants were intoxicated when interviewed. The sailors justified their assault on the conductress as self-defence because they claimed the woman

---

<sup>66</sup> Detective Constable 3643 to Officer in Charge, 13 December 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; H.P. Cranney to Officer in Charge, 04 April 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>67</sup> T.H. Codd to Officer in Charge, 29 June 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>68</sup> T.H. Codd to Officer in Charge, 30 August 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

picked up a tire iron to attack them. According to the sailors, in order to protect themselves, they also threw the driver from the tram. The Australians gave a different version of events. According to the conductress, the sailors were drunk and had aggressively propositioned her. The Americans were told to leave but refused; one sailor then told the woman that he would ride the tramcar to the depot because “he intended to take her home, when she finished work.”<sup>69</sup>

In the Australian version, it was at this point that the conductress picked up an iron bar, but only to change the tramline tracks to take the car to the depot. This action the sailors allegedly mistook for an attack. On hearing the disturbance, the driver came to her assistance, but was thrown roughly from the tram. The Americans then ran off. After a short investigation, the detective sergeant tracked down the American ratings and arrested them. Both men eventually received a summary court martial. They pleaded guilty, gave their victims compensation, and were docked pay for three months.<sup>70</sup>

Even when the US presence in Australia had fallen to a few thousand, assaults on Australians continued. On 28 August 1945, a guesthouse owner was attacked by an American sailor in Brisbane. Trouble began when the owner, Albert Wynn, told the American to leave because he had left the room in a deplorable condition after a night of debauchery with a local prostitute. After Wynn threatened to call the authorities, the American smashed him in the head with a bottle of gin and kicked him in the face. Rather than flee after he realized what he had done, the American chose to remain at the

---

<sup>69</sup> S.H. Hambrecht to Officer in Charge, 29 June 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

guesthouse. When police arrived, he admitted to assaulting Wynn.<sup>71</sup> After handing the sailor over to the US military, Queensland Police learned that the American only faced a summary court martial; he was confined to his ship for ten days and forced to pay a fifty-dollar fine.<sup>72</sup>

### **Gunfire and Shootings**

Queensland Police files point to the illegal use of firearms by some GIs. Examples of trigger-happy servicemen in Australian towns and cities are few; however, they were serious and indicative of how high time preference and wartime stress played a part in American crimes. An episode in March 1942 indicates the presence of these factors. Two American bomber pilots entered a Cloncurry hotel bar demanding drinks. When Maud Sweeney, the proprietor, told the men that the bar was closed, one of the pilots drew his sidearm and said “if you don’t give us a drink I will shoot you.”<sup>73</sup> Sweeney begged for mercy and fled the room when she had the opportunity. With Sweeney gone, the Americans searched the hotel looking for alcohol. Sweeney heard several gunshots coming from the back of the establishment which persuaded her to seek police intervention. She found an off duty constable who returned to the hotel and asked the airmen what they were doing. The constable’s probing incensed one lieutenant who pointed his gun at the Australian and threatened to shoot him. In an effort to placate the Americans and avoid bloodshed, Sweeney offered the airmen seven shillings, but they

---

<sup>71</sup> E.H. Ryan to Officer in Charge, 03 September 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>72</sup> E.H. Ryan to Officer in Charge, 22 November 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>73</sup> Senior Sergeant No. 1330 to Inspector of Police, QSA, SRS/39.

refused the money and demanded alcohol. Sweeney obliged. After finishing their drinks, they left the bar. When the Americans discovered the constable shadowing them, one of the lieutenants again levelled his gun and said “[s]tay where you are cop and keep your fucking hands by your sides.”<sup>74</sup> The American then fired his gun several times. Fearing for his life, unarmed, and needing support, the constable returned to the hotel and telephoned the police station; shortly after, the Queensland Police, with the assistance of US airmen, arrested the offenders, and took them back to their base.<sup>75</sup> The men were not punished and there was some speculation in the police report that the airmen were suffering from battle fatigue. The lieutenants’ commanding officer wrote to Cloncurry’s inspector of police, praised him for the conduct of his constable, and profusely apologized for the behaviour of his men.<sup>76</sup>

If high time preference and battle fatigue played a role in the behaviour of the flight lieutenants, lack of forethought coupled with simple boredom were other motives for firing guns. In the spring of 1942, a trainload of American soldiers on their way north, were held up in Aldoga, about four hundred kilometres north of Brisbane. To pass the time, the men decided that target practice was in order. The train had stopped in the middle of farmland, so the Americans were indiscriminate in their selection of targets. The farm’s owner complained to Queensland Police in Rockhampton.<sup>77</sup>

Sheer drunkenness also led to the reckless shootings. On 10 October 1943, a Queensland Police Sergeant was at his home in Gladstone when he heard a gunshot

---

<sup>74</sup> Constable 3506 to Inspector of Police, 03 March 1942, QSA, SRS 39.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Harry N. Broudon to Inspector of Police, 04 March 1942, QSA, SRS/39.

<sup>77</sup> C.S. Fielding to Inspector of Police, 16 April 1942, QSA, SRS/39.

outside. A few minutes later, a neighbour came to his home and told him a drunken American sailor was firing shots at a private residence. The sergeant made his way to the house and saw the American from an upstairs bedroom window; when he identified himself and tried to reason with the American, the sailor called him a “God damn cop” and reloaded his gun. The sergeant asked the sailor to exercise some judgement and come down, but the sailor replied with threats and more gunshots. A few minutes later, an on-duty constable and a civilian arrived and together they disarmed the sailor. After arresting him, the sergeant realized that the offender was the shore patrolman who was supposed to be on duty in town that night! The American was charged, handed over to US authorities, and court-martialled. He was found guilty of drunkenness and disorderly conduct, but acquitted on a charge of attempted murder. He was given a year’s imprisonment and a bad conduct discharge.<sup>78</sup>

## **Murder**

American servicemen killed several Australians during the occupation. In most cases, the killings were unpremeditated, typically stemming from fights that got out of hand. In such instances, US servicemen successfully pleaded self defence at their courts martial.<sup>79</sup> Potts and Potts note that American offenders were often convicted of lesser charges, such as manslaughter.<sup>80</sup> One case indicative of this pattern was the killing of Australian soldier David Wren. The case discloses the presence of national loyalties

---

<sup>78</sup> Sergeant 2780 to Inspector of Police, 15 October 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12034; K. Bryce to Inspector of Police, 17 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>79</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 234.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

among Americans during their stay in Australia. Trouble began when an American serviceman, F.B. Williams, accosted a fellow American who was out on the town with Australian ratings. When asked why he was cavorting with Australian sailors, one of the Australians told Williams to “nick off.”<sup>81</sup> The insult started a fight and after a few punches were exchanged, Williams ran off. However, Wren followed the American and while fleeing, Williams fired a couple of wild shots from a concealed gun. One of the bullets struck Wren in the chest, killing him instantly. Wren’s comrades caught the American and beat him until the US shore patrol arrived. In his interview with state police, Williams claimed that he was the victim of an unprovoked attack and one of his pursuers slashed at him with a bayonet. Williams was convicted at his court martial of voluntary manslaughter and given a ten-year sentence.<sup>82</sup>

Even though deaths were usually the result of fights between Diggers and GIs that got out of hand, a few civilian murders gripped the country. The most notorious of these were the three Jack-the-Ripper-like murders that took place in Melbourne in May 1942. In a sixteen-day period, three women were found strangled and half naked in the city. The press dubbed the killings the “brownout murders.” After a brief investigation, Victoria Police arrested US private Edward Joseph Leonski.<sup>83</sup> In a rare exception to wartime censorship, Australian newspapers reported the murders and Leonski’s arrest. Indeed, US authorities released abundant information on the arrest and investigation, in order to preclude accusations that they were trying to cover up the incident.

---

<sup>81</sup> Detective Sergeant 2927 to [Officer in Charge], February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*; Detective Sergeant 2927 to Officer in Charge, 17 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12034.

<sup>83</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 234.



There is no doubt that the private was guilty of the crimes; he was eventually court-martialled in July 1942 and sentenced to hang. However, the court martial was initially delayed because of questions about Leonski's sanity.<sup>84</sup> Three psychiatrists (one of them Australian) examined the American over a thirty day period before deeming him mentally fit to stand trial.<sup>85</sup> Despite the psychiatrists' declaration of sanity, contemporary sources noted Leonski had a penchant for strange behaviour. The *Courier Mail* reported in July 1942 that Leonski's comrades observed he had a fondness for drinking strange concoctions (mixing beer, whiskey, ketchup, ice cream and hot peppers), and often had blackouts after drinking.<sup>86</sup>

Historians have questioned whether Leonski was legally sane. Historian Kate Darian-Smith, in a study of wartime Melbourne, maintains that Leonski did not receive justice and the whole episode "demonstrates MacArthur's willingness to forgo a fair trial in order to pacify growing anti-American sentiment among Australians."<sup>87</sup> Potts and Potts also doubt Leonski's sanity. "Had the present-day attitudes of US law applied," they conclude, "Leonski would have been found not guilty by reason of insanity. But his trial came in the 1940s."<sup>88</sup> There is some merit to these arguments; as we have seen in other wartime quarrels, MacArthur had an eye on Australian public opinion and was willing to placate Australian authorities in order to promote sound relations.

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.; *Courier Mail*, 18 July 1942. For an in depth and sensational account of the murders, court martial, and hanging, see John R. Harvey, *Journey to the Gallows* (Sydney: Invincible Press, 1946).

<sup>86</sup> *Courier Mail*, 18 July 1942.

<sup>87</sup> Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front, 1936-1945* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1990), 217.

<sup>88</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 234.

Furthermore, evidence suggests US authorities themselves doubted Leonski's sanity. A confidential wire from Washington to the United States Army Services of Supply (USASOS) headquarters noted a history of mental instability among Leonski's family. The communiqué, which was received on May 27, stated that Leonski's mother had once been committed to Bellevue Hospital for manic depression and dementia. His brother Walter had also been under psychiatric observation, spent time in a reformatory, and was reportedly maladjusted to society.<sup>89</sup> It is possible MacArthur court-martialled an insane man in order to placate the Australian public. Leonski was hanged in November 1942 in Melbourne.

If there is some question over Leonski's mental state, there is no doubt that US military authorities were concerned about the effect that the murders would have on wartime relations. General Julian F. Barnes wrote to MacArthur on May 26 recommending that the court martial take place *in camera*, as he worried the scandalous nature of the crimes would reflect poorly on the American forces. Should the public get wind of any details, the reputation of the army would be hurt and morale undermined. Barnes also did not like the idea of the American forces being linked to the murders in the press. Despite these worries, Barnes believed the Australians should not be completely excluded from the proceedings; he suggested the Australian army and the state of Victoria both send representatives to observe the court martial. Barnes feared that barring the public from the court martial would negatively shape relations because he stressed to MacArthur that "every precaution will be taken to avoid the possibility of

---

<sup>89</sup> Washington DC to USAFIA, 27 May 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box 22, File: General Court Martial.

permitting public opinion to crystallize on the idea that the closed session is a means of ‘white-washing’ the case.”<sup>90</sup> To quell an Australian backlash, Barnes suggested the army issue a press release highlighting the recommendation to allow the attendance of two Australian representatives.<sup>91</sup>

MacArthur feared that even the slightest idea of a cover-up could hurt wartime relations so he rejected Barnes’s scheme.<sup>92</sup> Taking into account MacArthur’s desire to maintain good relations, Barnes came up with another proposal. He recommended granting the media access during the trial, but he wanted to retain the right to censor their stories. In addition, Barnes proposed that the Americans allow fifteen Australian officials to witness the events and have all testimony given in open court. MacArthur ultimately approved this proposal, although he added that should the president of the court martial wish to clear the court, representatives of the Australian government would be allowed to stay.<sup>93</sup>

Did these infamous murders, reported across Australia, affect wartime relations? John Hammond Moore argues that “[t]he impact of what Edward Leonski did cannot be overestimated. These were senseless, brutal crimes. It is obvious that Leonski’s name was used throughout Australia in 1942 to strike terror into the heart of many a headstrong

---

<sup>90</sup> Julian F. Barnes to Commanding General, Southwest Pacific Area, 26 May 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box, 22, File: General Court Martial; J.F.B. to HQ SWPA, 27 May 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box, 22, File: General Court Martial.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> H.H.B. to Commanding General, 02 June 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box, 22, File: General Court Martial.

<sup>93</sup> Julian F. Barnes to General Marshal, 02 June 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box, 22, File: General Court Martial; B.M. Fitch to Commanding General, United States Army Forces in Australia, 04 June 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box 22, File: General Court Martial.

daughter. Decades later middle-aged Australians still recalled this tragic episode.”<sup>94</sup>

Darian-Smith echoed this sentiment stating that the “psychological impact of these murders in Melbourne cannot be over-estimated... Women nervously hurried home through darkened, foggy streets, and many city offices appointed male staff to escort female employees...after work.”<sup>95</sup> In contrast to other historians, Potts and Potts argue that “[t]here is no evidence that the incident prejudiced community attitudes against other GIs.”<sup>96</sup>

Potts and Potts are correct in that there is no documentary evidence to suggest relations suffered either at the official or more popular levels. However, most people do not leave records intimating their thoughts and feelings and the press prudently avoided speculation about the case’s impact on wartime relations. Women may have thought twice before they considered dating GIs or feared going out alone at night. Australian men and parents perhaps felt more consternation when they saw GIs with Australian women.

Leonski’s were not the only murders. Brisbane also witnessed a highly publicized murder of an Australian woman at the hands of an American serviceman. On 19 June 1944, Doris May Roberts was found beaten to death in a city laneway. That very night, Queensland Police tracked down two Americans who were with Roberts before her murder. Upon interrogation, paratrooper Avelino Fernandez admitted to killing the woman. According to Fernandez, Roberts had willingly followed him to the laneway for

---

<sup>94</sup> Moore, *Over-Sexed, Over-Paid, and Over Here*, 148.

<sup>95</sup> Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 216.

<sup>96</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 234.

sex and afterwards demanded payment. Fernandez said the demand enraged him so much that he punched the woman in the face and repeatedly kicked her in the head. After he signed his confession, Fernandez appeared in a Brisbane Police Court and the Americans took him into custody. The press reported the murder the next day; the *Courier Mail* wrote that the woman's jaw had been broken, that she asphyxiated on her own blood, and that sex took place post-mortem.<sup>97</sup>

US authorities wanted to impress upon the Australian people that justice would be served quickly and severely. Fernandez's court martial therefore began the day after Roberts's murder. US authorities gave the press access to the proceedings; reporting from the court martial, the *Courier Mail* offered its readers scandalous details about the crime. According to the paper, Fernandez admitted "I had kicked her all over. I was real mad. If she is dead that is where she ought to be."<sup>98</sup> The paper added that Roberts's demand for payment had made Fernandez "feel cheap" and this feeling had provoked his attack. The paper also revealed a racial component to the murder, as Fernandez claimed he would not have killed the woman had she been white. Roberts's was a "half-blood" Aboriginal.<sup>99</sup> Fernandez was found guilty on July 21 and sentenced to hang.<sup>100</sup> In deference to Queensland law (the death penalty was abolished in 1922), Fernandez was

---

<sup>97</sup> C. Risch to Officer in Charge, 01 July 1944, Queensland Police Museum, File: Murder of Doris May Roberts by Avelino Fernandez, 1944; C. Risch to Officer in Charge, 01 August 1944, Queensland Police Museum, File: Murder of Doris May Roberts by Avelino Fernandez, 1944; *Courier Mail*, 20 June 1944.

<sup>98</sup> *Courier Mail*, 21 July 1944.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> *Courier Mail*, 22 July 1944; *Telegraph*, 22 July 1944.

taken to New Guinea and executed on November 20.<sup>101</sup> Roberts's murder was so heinous that American authorities chose to give it a high profile and allow press coverage.

## Sex Crimes

American personnel played a significant role in the increase of sexual assaults during the war, especially in 1942 according to official statistics. Like murders, some of these crimes received press coverage which usually revealed that offenders received heavy punishments. Of the seventy-one men charged with rape and statutory rape in Queensland in 1942, twenty-eight of them were US servicemen.<sup>102</sup> By any standard this proportion was disturbing. The following year, a parliamentary committee of inquiry revealed that sex crimes increased rapidly in 1943, at the peak of the US presence.<sup>103</sup> Although the number of sex crimes for Queensland reached 287, the inquiry concluded that the number of American offences dropped to twenty-three, or eight percent of all offences for 1943.<sup>104</sup> Comparable data for later years and other localities could not be found. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that sex offences were more prevalent than fragmentary statistics indicate.

Some sex offences did not factor into the above statistics because they were of the nuisance variety. For example, there were instances of American servicemen exposing themselves to Australian women. In March 1943, Queensland Police arrested

---

<sup>101</sup> Harvey, *Journey to the Gallows*, 126-28.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Sturma, , "Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942-1945," *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 24 (May 1989): 3-17.

<sup>103</sup> Libby Connor et al. *Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939-1945 War* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992), 159.

<sup>104</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 231.

an American merchant seaman, who exposed himself while sitting beside a woman on a bus.<sup>105</sup> On 21 December 1943, two women working at a milk bar were similarly harassed while working.<sup>106</sup> Women and girls in Moorooka were subjected to the activities of a serial flasher in the winter of 1944. GI Frank Savino was arrested for his conduct and admitted that he had taken to exposing himself to women and young girls in a vacant lot. US authorities never court-martialled Savino because he was deemed mentally unfit and discharged from the service.<sup>107</sup> Other examples of minor sex crimes included an American soldier exposing himself to a shoe saleswoman and a GI flashing a block of flats.<sup>108</sup> These were minor but upsetting incidents that reflected poorly on the American forces and they call into question statements that downplay the criminal behaviour of some GIs.

More importantly, statutory rape was a common sex crime during the occupation and statistics and police reports likely do not do justice to their frequency. In contrast to high profile murders and rapes, reports of these crimes rarely found their way into the press. These crimes came to the attention of state police forces by raids and parental complaints. According to one source, many GIs were not arrested in Sydney because public awareness of these crimes would have hurt relations and soured public perceptions of the GIs. Vince Kelly's biography-cum-memoir *Rugged Angel, The Amazing Career of Policewoman Lillian Armfield* describes how statutory rape was handled in Base Section

---

<sup>105</sup> Constable 2978 to [Senior Sergeant 949], 10 March 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>106</sup> Joan Brennan, "Statement," 21 December 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>107</sup> Inspector of Police to Commissioner of Police, 03 March 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031; Constable No. 3643 to Area Officer, 09 April 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>108</sup> P.G. Ryan to Inspector of Police, 26 May 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031; J.W. McKenna to Inspector of Police, 20 April 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

Seven, a popular location for GIs on furlough. The eponymous heroine of Kelly's work, Lillian Armfield, was a policewoman in wartime Sydney whose job was the "reclamation" of wayward girls. As a part of her duties, Armfield often participated in vice squad raiding parties directed at American Red Cross dormitories where servicemen on leave found temporary accommodation. The goal of the raids was suppressing statutory rape. However, Armfield claimed that it was impossible to suppress it because it was so widespread. Girls as young as thirteen and fourteen continued to be found in the beds of American servicemen every night. Armfield believed that these raids were never publicized because "the chiefs were anxious that nothing should mar the friendly relations of our citizens with the Americans."<sup>109</sup>

She was genuinely horrified by what she saw. "It was bad enough to find a fourteen year old girl in bed with a serviceman," she observed, "but it was shocking to find, as we did often enough, a girl of fourteen or fifteen in bed with not one, but two American servicemen. At times we found one American serviceman in bed with two young teenagers."<sup>110</sup> Armfield's recollections explain why these crimes might not appear in government statistics:

These raids were conducted with strict regard to the sensitivity of those controlling the United States Forces in Australia. No member of the Vice Squad, nor [sic] any of the policewomen, would address a single word to the American servicemen whose beds were shared by the young Australian girls. While the girls were required to dress themselves in readiness to leave, the men of the U.S. Provost would take full particulars of the identity of the servicemen. They would inspect leave passes and other papers, and note a record in their diary. That would close the episode for them.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup> Vince Kelly, *Rugged Angel, The Amazing Career of Policewoman Lillian Armfield* (Sydney: Angus & Roberts, Ltd., 1961), 182.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* 184.



As the detailed research for this dissertation focused on the Americans in Queensland, one would need to conduct an examination of New South Wales police records to confirm Armfield's claims. It is likely that the state's police investigated parental complaints and arrested GIs as they did in Queensland. Still, it appears that the policy in Base Section Seven was to ignore American misconduct during raids and treat statutory rape as a social problem.

The belief that statutory rape was a non-crime or that women were the guilty parties enjoyed wide currency among American authorities. A USASOS colonel, writing in January 1943, believed that in such cases "there is little we can do, or should, do, until the Australian authorities take some action to control the girls. After all, what should our men do if the advances are made by young ladies."<sup>112</sup> The colonel recommended that authorities do nothing until complaints against GI conduct became more widespread. In April 1943, Provost Marshal J.P. Holland, reacting to the high number of statutory rape reports, recommended that all base section commanders warn their men that they were "liable to punishment for having carnal knowledge of a girl under age."<sup>113</sup> Still, even the provost marshal appeared to view the matter as a social rather than a criminal issue because he informed the USASOS chief of staff that the chaplain had been informed of the situation.<sup>114</sup> Most American soldiers did not know they were breaking Australian law. In April 1943, base section commanders were told to inform their men that

---

<sup>112</sup> H.H.B. [Harry H. Baird] to Chief of Staff, 15 January 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1266, File: Morals and Conduct.

<sup>113</sup> J.P.H. to Chief of Staff, 16 April 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1266, File: Morals and Conduct.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

“Statutory Rape is carnal knowledge with the consent of a female under the age of consent (generally, in Australia, under the age of 18 years).”<sup>115</sup>

Statutory rape appears to have been ignored sometimes in Sydney. US military and civil authorities likewise took a pragmatic approach elsewhere. The crime was on the statute books, but those who enforced the law had doubts about its merits. Was it logical to charge and arrest a nineteen-year-old GI for having sex with a seventeen-year-old girl? Were American servicemen at fault when girls, sometimes lying about their age, threw themselves at GIs? Even Armfield admitted that girls often lied about how old they were and aggressively pursued US servicemen.<sup>116</sup> Despite reservations over the justice of punishing American servicemen for statutory rape, some GIs were arrested for the offence in Base Sections Two and Three. However, an examination of Queensland Police reports shows unequivocally that the Queensland Police and US military authorities exercised leniency in most cases of statutory rape. Furthermore, American authorities, even when they chose to prosecute GIs, were hardly consistent in the punishments they meted out. There are no examples in these files of police raids on Red Cross hostels, but rather the charges followed reports of missing children or parental complaints. A few examples will show the nature of the encounters and the dilemmas of enforcement that they created.

In November 1942, having failed to return home from spending the evening in town, the parents of two Townsville girls (aged fourteen and fifteen) reported them

---

<sup>115</sup> M.J. Conway to Commanding General, Base Section 7 & Base Section 3, Commanding Officers, Base Sections Four and Two, 20 April 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 11, Box 21, File Discipline.

<sup>116</sup> Kelly, *Rugged Angel*, 183-4.

missing. When they were tracked down, the girls admitted to having consensual sex with two Americans. The men were located and admitted to the offence, although they maintained the girls said they were sixteen. After a month of repeated inquiries into the punishment of the offenders, US officials finally told Queensland Police that the men were now in New Guinea and would be dealt with there.<sup>117</sup>

In June 1943, Queensland Police received a call from a worried Townsville father who claimed his daughter was out with an American and feared for her safety. Police quickly tracked down the couple and after a brief interrogation both admitted to having intercourse after meeting in a local hotel. The police report noted that although the American knew the girl was under seventeen, she had pressed her affections. The American told police he loved the girl and planned to marry her; he was court-martialled anyway and sentenced to six months confinement with hard labour.<sup>118</sup> This uncharacteristically harsh penalty was likely the result of the offender admitting knowledge of the girl's age. His act was less forgivable than someone who claimed to have had sexual relations with a girl believed to be of legal age.

Two other cases give some credence to the theory that knowledge of the victim's age meant heavier punishments. The incidents involved the same Brisbane girl in the fall of 1944. The girl in question had decided not to return home after work. Instead, she spent a weekend in the city where she met an American soldier on Friday night. After some chat, they went to a room he rented. During the night, they had sex twice. Because

---

<sup>117</sup> L. Stone to Officer in Charge, 05 November 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; A. Jesbug [?] to Officer in Charge, 28 December 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>118</sup> J.J.A. Brown to Officer in Charge, 28 January 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; J.J.A. Brown to Officer in Charge, 04 April 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

the girl had not come home, her parents reported her missing, which started a police investigation. The police never found her and she returned home on her own accord on Sunday. Still, the police continued their investigation and proceeded to question the girl; under interrogation she claimed she did not give consent. After giving her version of events, Queensland Police found the GI. He admitted he had pressured the girl for sex and knew she was very young. After being handed over to American authorities, the GI was court-martialled and sentenced to six months imprisonment.<sup>119</sup>

During the same weekend, the same girl met another American on Saturday, went to his rented room, and willingly had intercourse. Later in the night, he asked to have sex again and when she refused and rolled on her stomach to dissuade him, he allegedly sodomized her. Queensland Police tracked down this American and he too admitted to knowing the girl was young. After he was handed over to American authorities, he was court-martialled and received a six-month prison sentence. He was acquitted on the charge of carnal knowledge against the order of nature.<sup>120</sup> These two cases are significant because despite the girl's agreement to accompany the soldiers to their rooms, the men were punished because they knew the girl was particularly young. If an instance of statutory rape was to be considered a forgivable offence, the circumstances had to meet criteria.

Another stiff penalty was handed out to a US private for statutory rape in August 1944. Queensland Police records document this GI received a one-year sentence for

---

<sup>119</sup> J. Hamilton to Officer in Charge, 26 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; James Hamilton, "Statement of Defendant Walter Jay Clothier," 27 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; J. Hamilton to Officer in Charge, 27 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>120</sup> J. Hamilton to Officer in Charge, 27 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; J. Hamilton to Officer in Charge, 01 March 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

sleeping with a Brisbane girl. The private had accosted the girl at a movie theatre and after a few minutes of flirting, the two went to a nearby park. Police found the two shortly after their coupling and arrested the American. Although the girl told police she gave her consent, she was only thirteen years old. US military authorities likely handed down a stiffer sentence because of the girl's very young age and the implausibility of a soldier maintaining that he believed the girl to be older.<sup>121</sup>

The moral character of Australian girls was sometimes put into consideration when deciding whether or not to charge American GIs. Queensland Police found a 22-year-old GI in bed with a Brisbane girl in July 1944. A police investigation revealed the two had been having sex for some time and a medical exam maintained the girl "was not the innocent girl one would expect at her age."<sup>122</sup> Because of the girl's past sexual experience and the fact that she consented to have sex, Queensland Police chose not to charge the American. Instead, police decided to investigate the girl and her mother to determine if the former was a neglected child. After interviewing the girl and her mother police decided she had a decent character, but was far from innocent. Police chose not to remove her from her mother under Section 23 of the State Children's Act.<sup>123</sup> Under this law, police had the right to remove children if they deemed their parents neglected them.

---

<sup>121</sup> L. Glatz to Officer in Charge, 29 August 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; L. Glatz to Officer in Charge, 02 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>122</sup> Sub-Inspector A. H[?] to Inspector of Police, 22 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032. The exam among other things determined if the hymen was intact.

<sup>123</sup> Constable Beattie to Officer in Charge, 10 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Sub-Inspector of Police to Inspector of Police, 17 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; S. Beattie to Officer in Charge, 22 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Sub-Inspector of Police to Inspector of Police, 22 July 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Senior Sergeant B.L. [?] to Inspector of Police, 01 August 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032. The State Children's Act (1911) allowed any authorized officer to remove children deemed neglected by their parents.

Police dropped their charges against a US sailor for having sex with a twelve-year-old girl, after the girl's mother told police the girl was as much to blame as the sailor. The fact that the sailor was older and likely more experienced was not brought into play. Instead, the police investigated the mother and concluded that she was not exercising sufficient control over her child. In this instance, the girl was removed from her mother's home and put into the care of the State Children's Department until she turned eighteen. After Queensland Police dropped their charges, US authorities decided not to proceed against the sailor.<sup>124</sup> Police also dropped charges against a US serviceman in the winter of 1945 after they learned that the girl with whom he had had sex was a state child who had lied about her age. Although the girl was seventeen, she had told the American she was nineteen before they had sex. Police concluded that the American was a victim of circumstance, since the girl instigated the contact and altered her identification to read that she was in fact nineteen.<sup>125</sup>

Another example of pragmatism revolved around the arrest of a twenty-seven-year-old American soldier for unlawful carnal knowledge of a sixteen-year-old Brisbane girl. The two had struck up a friendship over several months and became sexually intimate. When the girl missed her period, the mother questioned her about her relations with the American, learned of the affair, and contacted police. After an initial investigation, police charged the GI with statutory rape; all parties (the mother included) told police they were agreeable to marriage, which induced the police to drop the charges.

---

<sup>124</sup> J. Hamilton to Officer in Charge, 10 December 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Inspector [?] to Commissioner of Police, 22 January 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>125</sup> Constable [?] to Officer in Charge, 21 December 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Constable Field to Officer in Charge, 09 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

After the couple married, US authorities dropped all notions of pursuing a court martial against the serviceman.<sup>126</sup>

Some sex crimes went beyond statutory rape and fell within the definition of molestation. In one of the earliest reported sex crime cases committed by an American, a nine year old Brisbane girl was found under the bed of 42 year old staff sergeant Louis Garbus in July 1942. The American had lured the girl to his rented flat with promises of souvenirs and assaulted her there. Garbus never had the time to rape the girl because her mother and aunt came looking for her. With the help of the landlord, the women found the girl and called the police. The American was handed over to American authorities and court-martialled.<sup>127</sup> Garbus's arrest and trial received some press attention; the muckraking journal *The Truth* reported the incident and the fact that the sergeant received a twenty-year sentence for his crime. The paper devoted a large portion of the story to the long sentence imposed on the American and juxtaposed it with Queensland's comparatively light punishment for the same crime. *The Truth* pointed out that under Queensland law, a man could receive as little as a five-pound fine for assaulting young girls.<sup>128</sup> Garbus's punishment was uncommon in cases of molestation. The stiff penalty, the fact that it was reported in the press, and its comparison with lenient Queensland penalties suggest US authorities made an example of Garbus. The *Truth*'s story and the fact that MacArthur had allowed publicity in the Leonski court martial strongly suggests that US military authorities managed a judicial system that showed leniency whenever

---

<sup>126</sup> Detective Constable [?] to Officer in Charge, 21 December 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>127</sup> *Truth* (Brisbane), 08 September, 1942.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

possible, but let information about particularly unsympathetic offenders and their punishments reach the public via the press. Historically, many criminal justice systems have functioned in comparable ways, carefully selecting offenders for harsh punishment. However, the usual purpose is deterrence. In the case of the US authorities in Australia, another objective was to reassure the people who hosted them.

The *Courier Mail* reported on another molestation case in February 1944. A US court martial sentenced Henry Benjamin Newton to death for attempting unlawful carnal knowledge of a six-year-old girl, though it added Newton might appeal the ruling.<sup>129</sup> The only two cases of molestation found in the press highlighted tough sentences. The US authorities wished to stress that military justice was harsh and swift; this was likely done with the connivance of the Australian press and wartime censors, as censors usually prohibited information that might hurt wartime relations. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the Queensland Police files reveal that these were not the only examples of GIs receiving severe punishments for molestation. In February 1944, US military authorities also convicted a soldier for raping a small boy and sentenced him to over fourteen years in jail.<sup>130</sup>

If the press portrayed military justice as severe in cases of molestation, the reality was slightly different. Suspected offenders were not always convicted or they received lighter sentences. Of course, suspicion did not always mean guilt; some suspects could have been innocent. However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that American authorities sometimes shielded guilty men from heavy punishment or acquitted them

---

<sup>129</sup> *Courier Mail*, 07 February 1944.

<sup>130</sup> P.C. Constable [?] to Officer in Charge, 27 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.



altogether. For instance, in November 1944, Queensland Police charged a thirty-seven year old American serviceman with unlawful carnal knowledge of a fourteen-year-old girl. The girl told police that the American, who was a friend of the girl's parents, had forced her to have sex a dozen times. This man was not court-martialled for these offences, as he was shipped to an undisclosed battle zone shortly after his arrest.<sup>131</sup> Similarly, in the spring of 1944, a US soldier was given one month's detention for attempting to molest a six-year-old boy.<sup>132</sup> Another American soldier admitted to molesting a thirteen-year-old boy, but US military officials never told Queensland Police if the man was punished after they removed him from Australia.<sup>133</sup> In another case, Queensland Police arrested a lieutenant commander in the US maritime service for molesting a six-year-old girl. The commander claimed he was too drunk to remember the incident, although the victim stated he gave her money when she started to cry. Queensland Police learned the American "was not dealt with by court martial here, but...he was shipped back to the United States together with a report of the circumstances of the offence, where any further action against him, will be taken by the Branch of the service in which he serves."<sup>134</sup> Queensland Police never learned what became of him.

Finally, US military authorities not only moved their men out of Australia rather than court-martial them, but in one case at least, servicemen probably perverted the course of justice to protect a likely child molester. In October 1942, Queensland Police

---

<sup>131</sup> "Record of Interview [Name Withheld], 05 November 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Detective Constable [?] to Officer in Charge, 13 November 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; C.J. Holt to Officer in Charge, 14 March 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>132</sup> Sergeant Gorman to Officer in Charge, 05 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>133</sup> N.W. Bauer to Officer in Charge, 19 September 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; N.W. Bauer to Officer in Charge, 14 February 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>134</sup> L.R. Wex to Officer in Charge, 15 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

arrested a US serviceman for molesting a young girl. After police handed the American over to US authorities, he was court-martialled; however, during the trial he produced two witnesses who supplied him with an alibi. The court found the man not guilty, and although it believed an offence had taken place, the court concluded that the girl and her sister (who was present during the offence) were wrong about the identity of the attacker.<sup>135</sup> Townsville's Police Inspector, Percy Mullally, believed the decision was an injustice and so wrote to Police Commissioner Cecil Carroll. Mullally informed the commissioner that the girls' testimonies were the strongest part of the case; they identified the offender from a group of five GIs. The inspector believed that US authorities were determined not to convict the private because they assisted him at every turn. They even paraded another GI in front of the girls who looked remarkably like the accused to cast doubt on their earlier identification.<sup>136</sup> National loyalty and *esprit de corps* resulted in military authorities protecting a fellow American. Mullally's letter also discloses police distrust of the US military in a town where the Americans had poor relations with local authorities and militant labourers.

If US authorities were inconsistent in their penalties for statutory rape the same cannot be said in most cases of attempted rape. Here punishments were for the most part severe, and there were very few cases where US authorities shipped offenders out of the country or state police did not learn of court martial results. In February 1943, an American private received six months imprisonment for attempting to rape a Brisbane woman. Likewise, a court martial sentenced an American soldier to four months

---

<sup>135</sup> P.J. Mullally to Commissioner of Police, 23 October 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

<sup>136</sup> P.J. Mullally to Commissioner of Police, 23 October 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

imprisonment for attempting to rape a woman in Brisbane. In another case, a US court martial sentenced a corporal to ten years imprisonment for assaulting a Townsville woman, even though it acquitted him of a second charge of rape. The *Courier Mail* reported in October 1944, that two US soldiers were arrested in the attempted rape of a thirteen-year-old girl. Eight months later Queensland Police learned that both men received three years imprisonment.<sup>137</sup>

US authorities sometimes punished rapists severely. In November 1943, an American private attacked a woman in the Brisbane suburbs, dragged her into a field, and raped her. The woman tried to fight back and scream, but her attacker threatened her life. After the rape, the woman immediately contacted Queensland Police. Following a two-day investigation, they found the American. The US Provost Corps and Queensland Police conducted a joint interrogation, during which time the American admitted to having sex with the woman but maintained she was a willing participant. Queensland Police doubted his testimony because the victim's house was nearby; she suffered serious injury; and she was menstruating on the night of the assault. Local residents heard screaming on the night in question. Queensland Police and the American MPs confronted the American with his victim, and after the woman gave a detailed account of

---

<sup>137</sup> Constable [?] to Officer in Charge, 12 April 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; H.M Katz to Officer in Charge, 02 August 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; J. McKenneth, "Court Martial of Corporal Jesse Eugene Edwards," 05 January 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; *Courier Mail*, 24 October 1944; R.G. Field to Inspector of Police, 26 April 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Detective Constable [?] to Inspector of Police, 21 June 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; L.R. Wex to Officer in Charge, 17 May 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12031.

the crime, the private confessed. The rapist was court-martialled, found guilty, and sentenced to life imprisonment.<sup>138</sup>

Apart from executions, this was one of the harshest sentences handed out during the war, probably because of the element of violence and the death threat. More commonly, soldiers convicted of rape received sentences of a few years. In the fall of 1943, Queensland Police considered an American serviceman the prime suspect of a rape in Rockhampton, after they arrested him for soliciting young girls for sex. The man was eventually court-martialled for raping a girl and handed a two-year sentence and a bad conduct discharge.<sup>139</sup>

Despite examples of severe punishments when it came to rape, Queensland Police files reveal that some rape cases did not conclude neatly. Some offenders escaped punishment, which casts doubt on the reliability of government statistics. For instance, a US serviceman allegedly raped a Rockhampton woman in her home in early 1944, but she could not identify him positively because it was too dark. Neither US military police nor Queensland Police could find the suspect.<sup>140</sup> Because there was no conviction, the case would not have been reported as a rape by an American serviceman. Even when a soldier admitted his crime, a court martial was not always a certainty. In the fall of 1945, an American soldier admitted to violently raping a Brisbane woman, but the victim would not proceed against her attacker so US authorities had to release him.<sup>141</sup> There is no

---

<sup>138</sup> H. Bischof and N.W. Bauer to Officer in Charge, 17 February 194[4], QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>139</sup> Sergeant [?] to Officer in Charge, 04 November 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Sergeant [?] to Officer in Charge, 04 August 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>140</sup> J. Cashel to Inspector of Police, 29 February 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>141</sup> John T. Doherty to Officer in Charge, 10 October 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; P.F. Smith to Officer in Charge, 07 November 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

record of punishment for the GI who Queensland Police suspected in the rape of an 84-year-old woman.<sup>142</sup> Similarly, state police did not learn what punishment a US soldier received for allegedly raping an 18-year-old Brisbane girl.<sup>143</sup> Finally, US authorities acquitted an American private for raping a fourteen-year-old Brisbane girl for lack of sufficient evidence even though Queensland Police had built a strong case with forensic evidence.<sup>144</sup> It is difficult to know what to make of official statistics when the events like these show that not all cases would have been reported

A general pattern emerges with regard to sex crimes against Australians. It is a pattern necessarily based on details from well-reported cases, rather than statistical data. Statutory rape was for the most part considered a social problem and in many instances offenders escaped courts martial or convictions. In Sydney, wayward girls were “reclaimed” but there does not appear to have been vigorous action taken against GIs during vice raids, although only a thorough examination of New South Wales police records would confirm this. In Queensland, where most Americans were located, GIs were occasionally convicted of statutory rape but punishments were generally light. In contrast, more heinous crimes (molestation, attempted rape, and rape) were understandably investigated with more vigour by American and Queensland authorities and convictions were more forthcoming and punishments rigorous. Some offences, like the murder of civilians, received press coverage that included descriptions of harsh punishments. Not all cases ended in a guilty conviction or even a court martial. There is

---

<sup>142</sup> L.R. Wex to Officer in Charge, 13 July 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>143</sup> Detective Sergeant 2893 and Detective Sergeant 3306 to Officer in Charge, 10 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>144</sup> H.P. Cranney to Officer in Charge, 20 June 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; R.S. Trost to Officer in Charge, 26 July 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

the possibility that some GIs were innocent. However, evidence indicates that military authorities, imbued with a desire to protect fellow soldiers, sometimes shipped personnel out of the country to avoid courts martial that would embarrass the Americans in Australia and hurt wartime manpower.

### **Crimes Committed by African Americans**

An examination of the Queensland Police files leaves an impression that blacks committed few petty crimes. Quite likely their share of minor offences was less than their proportion of the American military establishment (they made up slightly less than ten percent of the American forces in Australia). The probable under-representation of African Americans as petty offenders is not surprising given that many black GIs were in remote locations or confined to certain areas at the behest of the Commonwealth government and because of fights with white servicemen. They had fewer opportunities to commit offences against Australians. Still, because black personnel were not completely segregated from white Australians there were examples of minor offences. In July 1942, Queensland Police arrested three black GIs for stealing gold pens from a Cairns merchant.<sup>145</sup> In August 1945, a black merchant seaman stole fifteen shillings from a lady he met in South Brisbane. When the woman noticed the money missing from her purse, she complained to the police. The sailor was found at a local club and, upon interrogation, he explained he was low on money and thought the woman would not mind

---

<sup>145</sup> W. Barnett to Inspector of Police, 31 July 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

the loss of a few shillings. Police charged the man with theft and handed him over to the US provosts.<sup>146</sup>

Black Americans also committed a few serious crimes against Australians. On 11 September 1942, Edward Nettles attacked two men with a knife during a brawl with white GIs. State police were on the scene because they had quelled an earlier brawl. Seeing Nettles had seriously stabbed the two men, Queensland sergeant Archer Brown tackled the American. Nettles lashed out at the sergeant with his knife, but he was eventually restrained. Nettles's friend (Australian soldier Joe Anderson) struck the sergeant in the back of the head, which gave Nettles the opportunity to break free and resume his attack. The Queensland sergeant only received wounds to his arm, although one report claims that Nettles went for his heart. Nettles and Anderson eventually fled the scene, but police arrested them after another struggle. Nettles was eventually handed over to US authorities and received a ten-year sentence for his crimes. His accomplice Joe Anderson received a six-month sentence for attacking Brown.<sup>147</sup>

There were other examples of black GIs attacking Australians and several incidents made their way into the press. The *Courier Mail* reported in January 1943 that a black soldier stabbed a railway guard in the Brisbane suburb of Albion.<sup>148</sup> In May, the same paper reported that a coloured serviceman attacked Jessie Richards in South

---

<sup>146</sup> W.B. Carter to [Officer in Charge], 31 August 1945, QSA, Police Files, A/12030.

<sup>147</sup> Commissioner of Police to Minister for Health and Home Affairs, 28 October 1942 QSA, Police Files, A/12035.; Detective Constable 3199 to [Inspector of Police], 23 November 1942 QSA, Police Files, A/12035.; Detective Sergeant [?] to [Inspector of Police], 23 November 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12035. Interestingly, Rosemary Campbell argues that this incident "reinforced conception about the worth of Negroes" because the policemen who arrested Nettles were recommended for a commendation; Anderson was only fined five pounds; and Nettles was given ten years' hard labour. She is clearly wrong about Anderson's punishment and seems to downplay the seriousness of Nettles crimes and the fact that he resumed a fight that Queensland police had earlier stopped. See Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 117.

<sup>148</sup> *Courier Mail*, 13 January 1943.

Brisbane after the woman refused his offer to accompany her home.<sup>149</sup> Under the title “Negroes Questioned About Stabbing,” the *Telegraph* described another attack in July, reporting that sixty-year-old Percy Jackson suffered a gash on the side of his head after an African American soldier knifed him. The newspaper added that another man was assaulted presumably by the same serviceman and a companion.<sup>150</sup> In another story, the *Courier Mail* mentioned that a black GI had assaulted two Brisbane women. In the first attack, the man grabbed a woman by the throat and only stopped his attack with the arrival of an allied officer. Later, the same man hit a married woman with a paling.<sup>151</sup> None of the accounts offered motives or details; but such stories could only strain relations between black GIs and Australians. It is also possible that they found their way into the press, despite wartime censorship, to malign the conduct of African American troops. American misconduct was rarely reported because it was deemed detrimental to wartime relations.<sup>152</sup> Yet, black American delinquency did not appear to receive the same protective treatment. As we saw in earlier chapters, US and Australian authorities did not want black GIs associating with Australian women. Perhaps poor press coverage of black GIs was allowed in order to limit this interaction. Authorities in Britain did something very similar to encourage segregation and limit civilian interaction with black GIs. According to David Reynolds, they conducted a whispering campaign which spread rumours about black sexuality and violence.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> *Courier Mail*, 14 May 1943.

<sup>150</sup> *Telegraph*, 02 July 1943.

<sup>151</sup> *Courier Mail*, 03 January 1944.

<sup>152</sup> E. Daniel and Annette Potts, “American Newsmen and Australian Wartime Propaganda and Censorship, 1940-1942,” *Historical Studies* 21 (October 1985) : 570.

<sup>153</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 225, 304.



Queensland Police files offer other examples of serious crimes. In April 1944, two black Americans robbed a man in Brisbane after the latter asked for directions. The Americans led the man down a laneway, attacked him, and stole sixty-three pounds. Unable to pursue the men after the attack, the civilian approached the police, who later found the American by driving around South Brisbane with the victim. Although the GI stoutly denied any involvement in the robbery, police managed to find several other black GIs who testified that the accused had had a lot of money on the night of the robbery. When confronted with this information the accused still denied involvement, but offered to give the victim sixty-three pounds. Satisfied that they had their man, Queensland Police charged Powers and handed him over to US authorities. The American received three years' imprisonment for the robbery. His accomplice was never found.<sup>154</sup>

Another example of robbery occurred in February 1944, when a black sailor led an Australian merchant seaman down a laneway with the promise of finding him a woman. Once down the laneway, the American pressed a knife against the Australian's stomach and demanded his valuables. After giving into his assailant's demands, the Australian fled and contacted the police who began a search of South Brisbane. After a few hours, police stopped US sailor Wesley Bell, whom the victim identified as his attacker. Police searched the American's room and found the victim's valuables. This discovery prompted a confession. He was handed over to US authorities, court-martialled, and sentenced to three years in prison.<sup>155</sup> Finally, a US private was charged

---

<sup>154</sup> F.K. Rockett to Inspector of Police, 09 June 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12030.

<sup>155</sup> W.R. Carter to Officer in Charge, 28 February 1945, QSA, Police File, A/12040; W.R. Carter to Officer in Charge, 21 July 1945, QSA, Police File, A/12040.

for unlawfully wounding a coloured Brisbane woman. The woman, with whom the private had had an amorous relationship in the past, flaunted her new boyfriend in front of the black GI. In his rage, he stabbed the woman. Police found the American after a brief search and handed him over to US authorities.<sup>156</sup>

Some black GIs committed statutory rape. Several historians have argued that black GIs were unfairly punished in comparison to white GIs court-martialled for the same crimes. This alleged disparity has been used to support a larger claim that racism and fears over miscegenation prevalent in the US military meant that blacks could never expect just treatment when it came to courts martial. Rosemary Campbell maintains that there was only one case of statutory rape committed by a black GI during the entire war and his sentence was five years in prison. She proposes that this contrasted the punishment of whites, as no white GI received more than six months imprisonment.<sup>157</sup> Campbell's argument is incorrect on two points. First, it will be recalled that one white GI received one year in jail for statutory rape in August 1944. Second, in another case of statutory rape that Campbell does not mention, a black GI received a very light punishment. Queensland Police arrested black serviceman Laurence William Edwards for unlawful carnal knowledge of a fifteen-year-old Queensland girl in September 1944. The American claimed that he did not know her true age, but the girl's mother stated otherwise when she was interviewed. Regardless of his claims of ignorance, the man was handed over to US authorities, but he never received a general court martial. Instead, his commanding officer confined him to the brig for three weeks. Edwards was not the only

---

<sup>156</sup> W.L. Hocken to Officer in Charge, 13 September 1944, QSA, Police File, A/12031.

<sup>157</sup> Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, 131.

black serviceman the girl had slept with either. She had had a child earlier by another GI, who was never charged of anything and had left the country before Edwards was arrested.<sup>158</sup>

Black GIs were also guilty of a few rapes. Here we have solid evidence that these offences committed by Americans strained relations with civilians. One undated counter intelligence bulletin reported that “[t]he results of undercover investigation and analysis of newspaper stories reveal that considerable bitterness has developed among Australian Civilians toward Negro soldiers. Needless to say, much of this ill will has been engendered by sensational press reports of alleged sex offences.”<sup>159</sup> This report overstated civilian dissatisfaction with black conduct. As we saw in chapter four, only a minority of white Australians had serious problems with the presence of blacks and white provost officers and civilian police had to admit that the conduct of black GIs was good and no different than that of whites’. Nonetheless, the report indicates sex crimes hurt wartime relations. Media reports of black offences played a role in seeding distrust among Australians.

Historians have discussed cases of black Americans raping Australian women. Some suggest that black GIs were unjustly treated, received stiffer punishments, and were virtually guaranteed convictions. Kay Saunders discusses the conviction and execution of six black GIs for the gang rape of a white nurse in Port Moresby, New Guinea and suggests that whole affair was an injustice. She argues that the convictions occurred

---

<sup>158</sup> Detective Constable [?] to Officer in Charge, 18 September 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Sub-Inspector Sling [?] to Inspector of Police, 20 September 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Constable [?] to Inspector of Police, 05 October 1944, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>159</sup> “United States Army Forces in the Far East Counter Intelligence Bulletin Copy No. 53,” National Archives (Australia), Brisbane Branch, BP242/1, Q41191.

because of racial hysteria and even goes so far as to claim that the convictions were indicative of a wider pattern of injustices. She maintains that “[b]lack GIs were executed if convicted of sexual offences against white women.”<sup>160</sup> Darryl McIntyre echoes Saunders’s position, stating that “[w]hen Negro soldiers were tried by United States courts martial for sexual offences against white women, the penalty was usually the death sentence.”<sup>161</sup> Usually is a tricky word, it suggests a strong trend.

Potts and Potts offer a more cautious discussion of black sex crimes and their outcomes. In their summary assessment they note black GIs were not always executed if convicted. They describe a case where five black servicemen, convicted for gang raping a white Amcross worker in Townsville, had their death sentences commuted to life in prison. They also add that two other African American rapists received life sentences but had these sentences commuted to eight and ten years. Their account was more comprehensive than those advanced by Saunders and McIntyre. Still, Potts and Potts maintain that black GIs did not always receive fair courts martial; they even refer to one rape case as Australia’s own Scottsboro trial.<sup>162</sup>

Documentation supports Potts and Potts. Black servicemen could not always expect to be treated justly in every rape case. As we saw in chapter four, racism was widespread among white officers, especially within the Provost Corps. Despite the racism in the army, blacks were not automatically convicted if charged with rape, nor did they always receive unusually harsh punishments. Indeed, focusing solely on instances

---

<sup>160</sup> Saunders, “In a Cloud of Lust,” 186.

<sup>161</sup> McIntyre, *Paragons of Glamour*, 483.

<sup>162</sup> Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 237-8.

where black servicemen were convicted of rape distorts what really happened when black GIs faced accusations. To round out the picture of the treatment of black GIs charged with rape, we must also look at instances where they were freed. The *Courier Mail* reported in July 1942 that black serviceman J.L. Floyd was found not guilty for the rape of a Brisbane woman. Floyd had allegedly dragged the woman into an air raid shelter and violated her. Judging by one police report, the authorities had a strong case. He corroborated the victim's claim that she smashed him in the face with a flashlight and Queensland Police found what looked like the victim's hairs on his clothing. Despite this evidence, Floyd was found not guilty for the offence. This belies claims that black GIs could expect to be convicted without the benefit of a fair trial.<sup>163</sup>

In September 1942, Chief Provost Marshal William G. Purdy received a report of a black serviceman's attempted rape of a white nurse. The man was charged with attempted rape, but there was doubt that he would be convicted or even court-martialled, because there was only weak circumstantial evidence against him.<sup>164</sup> Another case shows that black soldiers, as Potts and Potts proposed, were not always subject to the death penalty when convicted. The rape, which occurred in the town of Goodna, was particularly brutal; the GI abducted the woman at night in the presence of her two small children, dragged her into small enclosure, and raped her. Queensland Police eventually

---

<sup>163</sup> *Courier Mail*, 31 July 1942; J.R. Harmon to Officer in Charge, 18 May 1942, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>164</sup> John S. Gibbs to Chief Provost Marshal, USASOS, 26 September 1942, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1266, File: Morals and Conduct.

tracked down the assailant, who confessed under interrogation. Police later learned that the GI received life imprisonment with hard labour.<sup>165</sup>

Military authorities did not necessarily treat all black rape suspects unjustly or execute them upon conviction. Why was this the case given racism and fears of miscegenation? Some US officials simply believed in the rule of law, even when it applied to black GIs. However, for another explanation, we can turn to an alleged gang rape of a Sydney woman in February 1944. We have no details of the offence itself, but we do know New South Wales Police did not believe that rape charges could be sustained against the alleged offender. As a result of the police assessment, the Base Section Seven commander, General Thomas Rilea wrote to USASOS commander General Frink about the offence and explained why the men involved were not charged with rape. Rilea told Frink,

I feel that a serious mistake would have been made had we gone blindly into this thing and preferred charges of a more serious nature. In other words, the coloured soldier picture is a ticklish one, not only so far as the public over here is concerned, but likewise so far as the Army is concerned.<sup>166</sup>

African American morale and the fear of rebellion concerned senior American officers. If the evidence was weak, the army was not going to railroad a soldier if it meant raising the ire of other black GIs. Rilea's letter provides other reasons why military authorities took a cautious approach:

You will recall that several months ago the President sent the coloured Bishop, Gregg, over here as his personal representative, to see how the coloured soldiers

---

<sup>165</sup> Detective Sergeant Cooke to Inspector of Police, 19 July 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12032; Inspector [?] to Commissioner of Police, 20 August 1943, QSA, Police Files, A/12032.

<sup>166</sup> W.J. MacKay to The Provost Marshal, 21 February 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 1, Box 1, File: General Frink Book 3; Thomas A. Rilea to Major General J.L. Frink, 23 February 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 1, Box 1, File: General Frink Book 3.

were being treated. Very definitely they are not to be pampered, but by the same token, so long as I am in command of this Base, I intend to take every means at my disposal to prevent criticism, not only from the Australian public, but also from our own Government.”<sup>167</sup>

Given the mainly warm welcome Australian civilians granted black GIs, US authorities worried about public reactions to injustice or heavy-handedness. During the American occupation of Britain, the public reacted with howls of protest in the summer of 1944 when American military authorities forced a confession from a black GI and convicted him of raping an English woman near Bath. There was such an outcry from the British public that General Eisenhower upheld a decision to reverse the verdict.<sup>168</sup> Military authorities feared similar protests from Australians. Moreover, US officials feared of criticism from Washington; the administration was concerned about black public opinion and the scrutiny of white liberals. Thus, as astute professionals, many of the US army’s senior officers were not going to risk their careers for a conviction led by racist presumptions and based on flimsy evidence. In some cases at least, African American GIs paradoxically received fair treatment because of their race.

## Conclusion

What conclusions can we draw concerning crimes committed by US servicemen on Australian civilians? Boredom, the stresses of wartime, high time preference, and the nature of mass conscript armies led to American crimes which hurt wartime relations. Reports of American crimes which occasionally made their way into the press strained

---

<sup>167</sup> Thomas A. Rilea to Major General J.L. Frink, 23 February 1944, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 1, Box 1, File: General Frink Book 3.

<sup>168</sup> Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 235-36.

relations and tarnished the image of Americans. Servicemen from the United States were the foreign “other” which made them an easy target of Australian criticism. Even in cases where crimes were not reported in the press, civilians still talked, gossiped, and spread stories. Tales of American misconduct made their way around communities to the detriment of wartime relations.

American authorities were pulled in two directions when it came to punishing offenders in Australia. On one hand, the need to reduce friction and resentment meant that notorious crimes were given press coverage and the offenders were punished severely. Punishment sent a message to US personnel, and it placated the Australian public. In addition, punishments reduced the criticism that US officials protected their own countrymen. On the other hand, the need to maximize manpower meant that many GIs escaped serious punishment after committing crimes. Leniency hurt relations, at least with state police and the victims of crime. Repeatedly, offenders received lenient summary punishments from commanding officers or were moved out of the country to avoid the scrutiny of civil authorities. State police authorities were often unable to ascertain if military authorities punished offenders or held courts martial. They believed the US military deliberately transferred GIs to escape punishment.

A letter from JAG officer Ernest A. Burt to staff judge advocates in Australia confirms that these suspicions had merit. The War Department directed that the armed forces should, as far as possible, reduce the number of courts martial and soften punishments. Burt’s 1943 letter noted that “[t]he War Department has repeatedly admonished military leaders to resort to court martial only as a last resort; even then to



utilize the lowest type of punishment and as indicative of a policy that this punishment should be resorted to, and then maintained, only when absolutely necessary.”<sup>169</sup> Wartime exigencies dictated that all possible manpower had to be used and incarceration hurt that effort. Official policy, as laid down by the War Department, stated further that court martial sentences should avoid confinement as much as possible and that the minimum period of confinement as a rule should be imposed. The memo added that “[a]s soon as a sentence of confinement is deemed to have served its purpose, or in any case when the prisoner’s organization is ordered overseas, the use of the appropriate commanders’ power to remit or suspend unexecuted portions of confinement, is encouraged.”<sup>170</sup> Punishment was left up to the discretion of commanding officer.

Finally, black GIs also committed their share of crimes and I have the impression that a disproportionate share of stories found their way into the press. If this was the case, and my reading of the papers recommends that view, the imbalance may have been by design to discourage interaction between black GIs and Australian civilians (especially women). Such a policy would have mirrored a whispering campaign in Britain. There is also some evidence that highly publicized rapes strained relations. Some historians have argued that African Americans could expect injustice and harsher punishments as a matter of course while in Australia. This was not always the case. Sentences sometimes seemed just as arbitrary and inconsistent for whites. Even when crimes were committed, courts martial did not always convict black soldiers. Rather than

---

<sup>169</sup> Ernest A. Burt to Staff Judge Advocates, 16 September 1943, NARA II (College Park), RG 495, Entry 179, Box 1269, File: Prisoners.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

court-martialling black suspects, as one might expect if the army had been run from top to bottom by committed racists, senior officers took a politically cautious approach to accusations. They feared the army could come under fire in Australia and back home if it appeared to treat black GIs unjustly.

## CONCLUSION

In November 1945, the last American military base on Australian soil closed, yet, the occupation for most Australians ended much sooner.<sup>1</sup> Brisbane's *Telegraph* noted as much in an October 1944 editorial entitled "Americans Leaving Australia." Reflecting on the past three years, the editorial stated that the "departure from Australia of the bulk of the American forces, though gratifying as evidence that the war is moving on, will be received with regret, for in spite of *minor frictions and irritations* – remarkably slight in the circumstances – the Americans had won a place not only in our gratitude but in our affection" (italics mine).<sup>2</sup> This assessment might characterize the American occupation in the context of a global war and it might serve as an example of how sanitized memories are fashioned through the media, but this dissertation has shown that problems and crises were not trifling. Those Australians and Americans who had to live with tensions and friction did not consider them minor. Later in the *Telegraph* article, the editor suggests as much,

[t]he departure of the Americans will not be the end of an episode of mutual benefit. Too many Australian girls have married Americans and too many sound friendships have been formed to permit the contact established between the two countries to lapse, and those friendships greatly outweigh *the antagonisms that inevitably have been generated*. There is every reason to hope that this association of people of common stock, common traditions, and common ambitions, forged in war, will develop even more strongly in peace, when the *wartime causes of irritation and friction* will slacken (italics mine).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> John Hammond Moore, *Over-sexed, over-paid, and over here: Americans in Australia, 1941-1945* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981), 268.

<sup>2</sup> *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 23 October 1944.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

What were these wartime causes of antagonisms, irritation, and friction that the author mentions? John Hammond Moore concludes that “[v]irtually all of the criticism levelled at the American serviceman by various elements of Australian life during World War II can be summed up in two words: sex and *violence*.”<sup>4</sup> These words effectively labelled two of the fault lines that emerged during the occupation, but they were neither the only fault lines nor the root causes of fractious relations.

The occupation brought thousands of young conscripts to Australia who were trained to kill and were forced into a dull, monotonous, all male environment. Similar to other armies of occupation, the monotony and boredom of army life stimulated “escape reactions” in the form of sexual relations with civilian women. As John Willoughby notes in his study of the American occupation of Germany the “central headache which faced Army command during the first years of the occupation...was the apparently unrestrained sexual activity of the American GI.”<sup>5</sup> In addition, the US army provided soldiers with all of their basic wants, which diminished personal responsibility. It is worth reiterating the observations of war correspondent Ernie Pyle, who stated a “soldier loses his sense of property. Nothing is sacred to him. In civilian life you’d call it stealing, but over there it’s the way they do.”<sup>6</sup> This diminished sense of personal responsibility, brought on by army life, helps to explain the conduct of GIs in Australia, particularly with regard to criminal behaviour. Again, there are parallels here. In Okinawa Japan for instance, there have been over 4,600 serious crimes committed by American personnel since 1972, the

---

<sup>4</sup> Moore, *Over-sexed, over-paid, and over here*, 207.

<sup>5</sup> John Willoughby, “The Sexual Behavior of American GIs during the Early Years of the Occupation of Germany,” *The Journal of Military History*, 62:1 (January 1998): 157.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Miller, *Situation Normal* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1944), 172, quoted in Reynolds, *Rich Relations*, 78.

most infamous of which was the gang rape of a twelve-year-old girl in 1995.<sup>7</sup> During the American occupation of Australia, the nature of war and army life raised time preference which promoted casual sex, excessive alcohol consumption, violence, and crime.

Army life spurred a devil-may-care attitude among GIs when it came to sex relations with Australian women. Walter Luszki recalled how the nearness of death prompted many of his comrades to live for the day in the form of affairs with Australian women. Of course, this attitude cut both ways; the war disrupted families, broke down parental controls, sent Australian husbands away from their wives, and created stress for Australian women. The orientation in the present – *carpe diem* – affected Australian women; many behaved as promiscuously as GIs.

Although the *Telegraph* editorial cites shared ancestry and traditions as reasons for continued co-operation after the war, this was in fact another root cause of friction and problems between US personnel and Australian civilians. Some American personnel and Australians might have shared the same Anglo-Celtic cultural and ethnic origins, but they were nonetheless different and ignorant of each other's history and culture. These allies retained their national loyalties and cultural values. Furthermore, by declining an Australian offer to establish a programme for advancing cultural and historical understanding, MacArthur may well have lost an opportunity to minimize American insensitivity.

---

<sup>7</sup> *The New York Times*, 07 March 1996.

National loyalty resulted in particular problems between the US military and Queensland's state police; national loyalty and favouritism affected how US military authorities dealt with the crimes of their personnel. Notorious crimes garnered press attention (sometimes with the connivance of American officialdom) and offenders received harsh and swift punishment, but American authorities often used a variety of measures to exempt lesser offenders from courts martial when their crimes were more or less forgivable and their services needed to advance the war effort. Australian civilians and state police often were not asked to provide evidence; civilian complainants were occasionally harassed by American authorities; and the misconduct of US personnel was sometimes ignored altogether. Rather than keep American offenders in Australia for court-martialing, US military authorities moved them out of the country. Once out of Australia and away from the scrutiny of Australian officials, American military authorities meted out lenient penalties or none at all. This policy damaged relations between Queensland Police (along with the victims of crime) and the US military.

*Esprit de corps* and national loyalty were at the heart of this desire to protect fellow soldiers and countrymen. Coupled with these loyalties was an explicit American policy formulated to maximize manpower. The War Department demanded that US military commanders incarcerate offenders only as a last resort and maximize the use of summary punishments. Even those who were court-martialled in Australia could have had their punishments remitted once they left the country. The need to maximize manpower in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) meant that some US personnel who committed crimes against Australians were not punished or only leniently so. One must

stress that national loyalty and *esprit de corps* was not exclusive to the Americans. On several occasions, Queensland Police protected their own men from charges of brutality levelled by the US military. State police never took official action against constables who beat GIs and usually dismissed American complaints. Queensland police officials, loyal to their countrymen, sometimes protected them from the US military.

National loyalty manifested itself in other areas. The desire to protect one's fellow countrymen was evident when it came to civil litigation. Unlike criminal offences, divorce cases involving American servicemen could not hurt the manpower needs of the US army in the SWPA. At worst, GIs named as co-defendants in divorce proceedings would have had to pay monetary restitution to cuckolded Australian husbands. Nevertheless, American authorities still protected their men from having to appear as co-defendants in divorce trials. The desire to protect one's fellow countrymen factored into the official American policy that made it nearly impossible for Australian solicitors to serve GIs as co-defendants.

Different cultural values and histories coupled with conflicting goals also explain friction between Australian labour and the US military. American hiring practices, which gave military security paramount importance, alienated Australian applicants because they disliked questions deemed inappropriate or irrelevant. In some cases, rather than accept US military policy, which was regarded as an attack on privacy, Australian workers refused to co-operate with American authorities. Conflicting values were visible with the American military's dealings with Australia's labour unions. Labour militancy, particularly among the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) was met with American

incredulity and tactlessness. For the American military, union concerns were irrelevant when compared to tasks deemed necessary to defeat the Japanese. Since Diggers and GIs were fighting and dying in New Guinea, the Americans (especially junior officers in Cairns and Townsville) believed Australian labourers should do their utmost to win the war. They expected union members to suspend their fight for workers' rights and insistence on union managed work conditions. When Australian labourers chose rather to continue a decades long struggle, junior American military authorities suggested drastic actions and sometimes took them.

Some senior military officials shared their subordinates' frustration when it came to worker militancy. In Sydney, the director of the War Shipping Administration threatened to bypass civilian labour and use American work battalions in Sydney to force action from Australian authorities. Even MacArthur contemplated trying mutinous members of the Australian Seamen's Union by military tribunal rather than allow Australian officials to deal with them. Characteristically, MacArthur chose not to act on his first impulse and instead allowed Australian officials to deal with the mutineers. This dissertation has illustrated that time and again General MacArthur ignored recommendations from subordinates that would have alienated Australian officials and civilians. Although winning the war was his highest priority, MacArthur realized that nothing good could come from antagonizing a friendly host population. Alienating labourers meant GIs would have to be used in their place; not punishing notorious criminals publicly would have raised suspicions of "white washing."



MacArthur played a major part in avoiding antagonisms, but his unwillingness to promote mutual cultural awareness between GIs and Australians led to problems. Unlike the American occupation of Great Britain, where authorities on both sides made some positive efforts to foster mutual understanding, there was little effort to formulate similar policies in Australia. The commander-in-chief cannot be blamed completely for this, as the nature of war in the Southwest Pacific meant that any such policy would have been hard to implement. The constant “flow through” of troops to battle zones, the lack of manpower in the SWPA, and the dispersal of troops throughout the country meant that Australian suggestions for programmes of cultural awareness and education were dismissed. Ignorance of Australian history and culture sometimes manifested itself in an American contempt for and ignorance of Australian customs and law. There was a widespread belief among GIs (and some MPs and shore patrolmen) that they were immune from Australian law. This resulted in conflict with state police.

The decentralized nature of the American occupation also meant that many problems were localized and isolated to particular base sections. American policy, when it came to relations in Australia, often left discretion to local commanders. Agreements that were established in one base section did not necessarily apply to others. This was apparent when it came to associations between state police services and the American authorities. For instance, an agreement to avoid arresting soldiers found with underage girls on vice raids in Sydney did not seem to have applied in other base sections. Decentralization also explains why some problems were often isolated to individual base sections and were not Australia-wide. Relations between the US military and Australians

in Base Section Two were particularly fraught. The misbehaviour of American servicemen and the concomitant indifference of US commanders were pronounced in places like Townsville and Cairns. Labour relations in the two communities were remarkably strained. News of problems in particular base sections only reached General MacArthur's desk if they were serious or when he received complaints from high ranking Australian officials. For instance, Prime Minister Curtin informed MacArthur of the sacking of laundresses in Townsville. Highlighting the decentralized nature of the American presence, the general blamed his "far flung" command on the firings. Relations in individual base sections depended to a large extent on the diplomacy, tact, and co-operation of individual US commanders. When these qualities were found wanting, it was left to those higher up the chain of command, usually MacArthur himself, to smooth out relations with conciliatory remarks and promises of better behaviour.

The nature of the American occupation also meant that some problems went unresolved and simply disappeared. The American presence in Australia waned in the second half of 1944; MacArthur moved his headquarters to New Guinea in August, and that island became the American staging ground for the invasion of the Philippines. Australia's significance as an entrepôt diminished as New Guinea's grew. As a result, tensions along the fault lines of jurisdiction and policing, gender, labour, race relations, and crime diminished as the war passed Australia by.

The American occupation of Australia was not just a story of conflict and crises. There was also immense co-operation between US military and Australian authorities. Both sides realized, for example, that sexual relations were inevitable and tailored policy

accordingly. Prostitution was allowed as an antidote to the all male environment that army life entailed, as it provided an outlet for male sexual urges. In contrast, the US military did all it could to discourage marriages between Australian women and American men. Not only did such unions detract from the war effort, but they posed a financial burden for Uncle Sam.

There was also convergence when it came to relations which crossed racial lines. Australian civilians, for the most part, greeted African American GIs as saviours and treated them well during the war; however, American authorities (at the behest of Australian officials) partially segregated blacks from Australians. American concerns about the state of black morale and the fact that supply units were needed in urban areas meant that this policy was not strictly enforced. African American soldiers were often in segregated camps, yet they worked near white personnel and they went on furloughs into towns and city suburbs where they encountered white civilians and white service personnel from both countries. Australian and American authorities worried about sexual relations between black GIs and Australian women. As long as the women in question were prostitutes or the relations were “flings,” authorities tolerated such relations. But interracial marriages were discouraged by both sides. Only a few dozen marriages were permitted between black GIs and Australian women and these were allowed because pregnancy forced the issue. Sexual relations between Aboriginal women and GIs were also policed because of Australia’s history of discouraging and sometimes outlawing miscegenation. Marriages between GIs and Aboriginals were barred because of laws against interracial unions and an American immigration policy that did not permit the

settlement of Aboriginals. At a time when notions of white superiority and fears of race polluting still enjoyed wide currency in both countries it comes as no surprise that Australian and American authorities both discouraged interracial sexual relations.

There was a good deal of harmony between American and Australian authorities when it came to combating venereal disease. Australia and the United States both had a history of using state power to enforce “moral purity.” Practical manpower concerns also prompted the US military to limit the spread of venereal disease as much as possible. GIs contributed the high rates of venereal disease during the war, but the Queensland government and Australian press blamed Australian women for the spread of disease and conflated it with a breakdown in morality. The Queensland government targeted women in the fight on VD by keeping them under surveillance, confining them to lock hospitals, and forcibly treating them for disease. The US military co-operated with local authorities to find infected women and treat them for VD.

The American occupation of Australia resulted in tensions, problems, and conflict that played themselves out along the fault lines of jurisdiction, gender, labour, race relations, and crime. Authorities on both sides attempted to solve problems, soothe tensions, and manage relations between Australian civilians and American personnel while fighting the Japanese in the SWPA. These efforts did not always meet with success. Indeed Australian and US military officials themselves were sometimes at odds. As this dissertation has pointed out, some American policies actually heightened tensions and created resentment. Many areas of friction lingered until the American presence significantly diminished in 1944.

Besides examining aspects of the American occupation of Australia that have hitherto received little attention, this dissertation tells us that there is a need to extend the study of war beyond the battlefields and combat. The complexities of occupation, the social relations between civilians and soldiers, and efforts by authorities to manage relations are areas that require the further attention of historians. Just looking at the Second World War and the Cold War era suggest that there is much work to be done. The American military presence in Newfoundland, the Allied occupation of West Germany, the American occupation of Japan, and the US presence in South Korea and South Vietnam all have parallels with the present study. All of these occupations either involved allied countries, or in the cases of West Germany and Japan, did so over time. Relations between these countries' populations and allied military personnel need investigation. Moreover, the fact that there are American troops currently stationed in over 150 countries suggests that there is the possibility for research in this area for years to come.<sup>8</sup> In the context of the US presence in Australia, this study proves that the potential for new research has not been exhausted.

Problems between American personnel and Australians during the occupation did not threaten to upset the war effort or the alliance between the United States and Australia, but there were everyday problems between allies and concurrent efforts to manage relations in the context of a global war. The alliance required managerial effort in non-military as well as in military affairs. Both realms of alliance activity were

---

<sup>8</sup> United States Department of Defense, "Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths by Regional Area and by Country," 31 December 2007, <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/history/hst0712.pdf>, date accessed 11 July 2008.

necessary adjuncts of war. While the American military made mistakes on the civilian front, it had not left management to chance and had in fact expended great time and energy. Its priorities are revealing. It rejected cultural education, insisted on criminal jurisdiction, attempted to manage matrimony, arranged a half-way segregation of African-Americans, fumed about radical labour unions, and practiced astute diplomacy and public relations at the top level.

**2:1 Marriages Between American Personnel  
and Australian Women  
1942 to 1944**

Year	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	SA & NT	Western Australia	Tasmania	Total
1942	76	219	276	15	126	0	712
1943	325	584	881	8	178	1	1977
1944	734	426	1711	36	360	1	3268
Total	1135	1229	2868	59	644	2	5957

Source: *Australia in Facts and Figures*, 1945

I:1 US Troops in Australia June 1943 to March 1945						
	Northern Territory	North Queensland	South Queensland	Victoria	NSW	Total
	Base 1	Base 2	Base 3	Base 4	Base 7	
Jun-43	2105	26164	44833	19072	13945	106119
Sep-43	2392	23992	71668	13790	7589	119431
Dec-43	2514	20451	75358	2133	6741	107197
Mar-44	3180	15724	34797	1372	5963	61036
Jun-44	8316	12594	30025	0	6790	57725
Sep-44	5023	11038	20835	0	3755	40651
Dec-44	3378	5438	12839	0	2220	23875
Mar-45	1427	2895	8706	0	1702	14730

Source: Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 30.

Source: Potts, *Yanks Down Under*, 30.



## **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Primary Sources**

#### **(i) Archival Documents**

##### **Queensland State Archives**

Police Department  
Justice Department  
Crown Solicitor's Office  
Magistrates Court, Brisbane  
Public Works Department  
Court of Petty Sessions, Einasleigh  
Redland Shire Council  
Court of Petty Sessions, Landsborough  
Premier's Papers  
Chief Secretary's Office  
Health and Home Affairs

##### **United States National Archives and Records Administration II**

Record Group 495 – Records of Headquarters, United States Army Forces,  
Western Pacific (World War II), 1941 – 1947  
Record Group 496 – Records of General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area  
and United States Army Forces, Pacific (World War II), 1941 – 1946

##### **MacArthur Memorial Library & Archives**

Record Group 4 – Records of Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces Pacific  
(USAFPAC), 1942-1947

##### **Queensland Police Museum**

File: Murder of Doris May Roberts by Avelino Fernandez, 1944  
File: World War II  
File: Battle of Brisbane  
File: Criminal Investigation Branch Annual Reports

##### **National Archives of Australia – Brisbane Repository**

Series BP361/1 – Correspondence files relating to publicity censorship  
Series J1889 – Correspondence Files  
Series BP242/1 – Correspondence files relating to national security

**(ii) Newspapers and Periodicals**

*Courier Mail*  
*Daily Mirror*  
*Sunday Mail*  
*Truth*  
*Telegraph*

**(iii) Memoirs and Contemporary Writings**

Byrnes, Mathew, ed. *Wartime Recollections: Australia Remembers, 1945-1995*. Moorooka, Queensland: Moreton Commemorative Committee, 1995.

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo, ed. *Love, War, and the 96<sup>th</sup> Engineers (Colored): The World War II Diaries of Captain Hyman Samuelson*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

Horner, D.M. and J. Penglase, eds. *When the War Came to Australia: Memories of the Second World War*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1992.

Kelly, Vince, *Rugged Angel, The Amazing Career of Policewoman Lillian Armfield*. Sydney: Angus & Roberts, Ltd., 1961.

Luski, Walter A. *A Rape of Justice: MacArthur and the New Guinea Hangings*. Madison Books: Lanham, Maryland, 1991.

MacArthur, Douglas. *Reminiscences*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1964.

Mann, Molly and Berthia Foot. *We Drove the Americans*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson Ltd., 1944.

Meadows, Maureen C. *I Loved Those Yanks*. Sydney: George M. Dash, 1948.

**(iv) Video Recording**

James Baker, *Black Soldier Blues*. Produced by Mark Chapman and Veronica Fury. Big Island Productions, 2005. Documentary.

Otis Carter, *Black Soldier Blues*. Produced by Mark Chapman and Veronica Fury. Big Island Productions, 2005. Documentary.

## Secondary Sources

### (i) Books

Alomes, Stephen. *A Nation at Last? The Changing Character of Australian Nationalism 1880-1988*. North Ryde, New South Wales: Angus & Robertson Publishers, 1988.

Banfield, Edward C. *The Unheavenly City Revisited*. Boston: Little Brown, 1974.

Bell, Roger J. *Unequal Allies: Australia- American Relations and the Pacific War*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977.

Bérubé, Allan. *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two*. New York: The Free Press, 1990.

Brown, W.J. *The Communist Movement and Australia*. Haymarket, Australia: Australian Labour Movement Publications, 1986.

Burgmann, Verity. *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Butlin, S.J. and C.B. Schedvin. *War Economy 1942-1945*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1977.

Bykofsky, Joseph and Harold Larson. *United States Army in World War II, The Technical Services, The Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas*. Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1957.

Campbell, Rosemary. *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989.

Charlton, Peter. *South Queensland WWII, 1941-45*. Bowen Hill, Queensland: Boolarong Publications, 1991.

Chapman, Ivan. *Private Eddie Leonski: The Brownout Strangler*. Marrickville, NSW, 1982.

Connor, Libby, Lynette Finch, Kay Saunders, and Helen Taylor. *Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939-1945 War*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992.

Darian-Smith, Kate. *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime 1939-1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Davis, Colin J. *Waterfront Revolts: New York and London Dockworkers, 1946-61*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Day, David. *John Curtin: A Life*. Sydney: Harper Perennial, 2006.

Dyer, Gwynne. *War*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1985.

Evans, Raymond. *A History of Queensland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Gailey, Harry A. *The War in the Pacific, From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay*. Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1995.

Grossman, David. *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. New York: Back Bay Books, 1995.

Harvey, John R. *Journey to the Gallows*. Sydney: Invincible Press, 1946.

Hoppe, Hans-Herman. *Democracy, the God that Failed: The Economics and Politics of Monarchy, Democracy, and Natural Order*. New Brunswick: New Jersey, Transaction Publishers, 2001.

Kidd, Rosalind. *The Way We Civilise*. St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1997.

Lee, Ulysses. *United States Army in World War II, Special Studies: The Employment of Negro Troops*. Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1966.

Levine, Philippa. *Prostitution, Race & Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Markus, Andrew. *Australian Race Relations 1788-1993*. St. Leonards, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 1994.

McMullen, Ross. *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, 1891-1991*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Meyer, Leisa D. *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During World War II*. New York: Colombia University Press, 1996.

Moore, John Hammond. *Over-sexed, Over-paid, and Over Here: Americans in Australia, 1941-1945*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981.

Murphy, D.J., ed. *Queensland 1889-1965: The Big Strikes*. University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1983.

Potts, E. Daniel and Annette Potts. *Yanks Down Under: The American Impact on Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Reynolds, David. *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-45*. London: Phoenix Press, 1996.

Saunders, Kay. *War on the Home Front: State Intervention in Queensland 1938-1948*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989.

Street, Jessie M.G. *Truth or Repose*. Sydney: Australian Book Society, 1966.

Thompson, Peter and Robert Macklin. *The Battle of Brisbane: Australians and Yanks at War*. Sydney: ABC Books, 2000.

Vat, Dan van der. *The Pacific Campaign, World War II, The U.S – Japanese War 1941-1945*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992.

## **(ii) Articles and Magazines**

Brawley, Sean and Chris Dixon. "Jim Crow Down-under: African American Encounters with White Australia, 1942-1945." *Pacific Historical Review* 71 (2002): 607-632.

Doherty, Denis, ed. "Policing Cairns and the North." *Vedette Magazine: The Journal of Queensland Police Service*, October 1995, 20.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Brothels." *Vedette Magazine: The Journal of Queensland Police Service*, October 1995, 9.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Women Police: Women Policing Women," *Vedette Magazine: The Journal of Queensland Police Service*, October 1995, 12.

O'Brien, Ilma Martinuzzi. "Citizenship, Rights and Emergency Powers in Second World War Australia." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 53:2 (June 2007): 207-222.

Potts, E. Daniel and Annette Potts. "American Newsmen and Australian Wartime Propaganda and Censorship, 1940-1942." *Historical Studies* 21 (October 1985): 565-575.

Rothbard, Murray N. "Origins of the Welfare State in America." *The Journal of Libertarian Studies* 12:2 (Fall 1996): 193-232.

Saunders, Kay and Helen Taylor. "The Reception of Black Servicemen in Australia During World War II: The Resilience of White Australia." *Journal of Black Studies* 25 (January 1995): 331-348.

Saunders, Kay. "In a Cloud of Lust: Black GIs and Sex in World War II." In *Gender and War: Australia at War in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Joy Damousi and Maryiln Lake. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Sitkoff, Harvard. "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War." *Journal of American History* 58:3 (December 1971): 661-681.

Sturma, Michael. "Loving the Alien: The Underside of Relations between American Servicemen and Australian Women in Queensland, 1942-1945." *Journal of Australian Studies*, 24 (May 1989): 3-17.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Public Health and Sexual Morality: Venereal Disease in World War II Australia." *Signs* 13:4 (Summer, 1988): 725-740.

Willoughby, John. "The Sexual Behavior of American GIs during the Early Years of the Occupation of Germany." *The Journal of Military History*, 62:1 (January 1998): 155-178.

### **(iii) Unpublished Material**

McIntyre, Darryl. "Paragons of Glamour: A Study of U.S. Military Forces in Australia." PhD dissertation, University of Queensland, 1989.

### **(iv) Government Publications**

Commonwealth Department of Information. *Australia in Facts and Figures*, vol. 9. Canberra: 1945.

United States Department of Defense. "Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths by Regional Area and by Country," 31 December 2007.  
<http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/history/hst0712.pdf>. Date accessed 11 July 2008.