

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NORTH QUEENSLAND

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(Read at a meeting of the Society on November 22,  
1956.)

### Introduction

The history of the progress of economic development in Australia from the arrival of Captain Arthur Phillip in 1788, the establishment of the first free settlers by the emigrant ship "Bellona" on January 15, 1793, at the Hawkesbury River, the progress of exploration by sea and land, and the settlement inland has been ably recorded in published works.

But in the years preceding the separation of Queensland from New South Wales in 1859, the administration of the affairs of the new land had passed through many phases, from the convict days of Port Jackson to the proclamation of free settlement at Moreton Bay in 1842. The earliest attempts to build up a self-supporting community began when the time-expired convict and those to whom clemency had been extended provided artisans and labourers. Rich agricultural lands had been opened up such as the Hawkesbury River in 1789, though for lack of experienced agriculturalists that first settlement did little to supplement the needs of the new colony. In 1792, when Governor Arthur Phillip resigned there were of live stock, 192; land under cultivation, 1,703 acres; and 3,500 inhabitants.

The condition of the country under a military organisation, and the train of evils which took years to eradicate, has been dealt with by many historians; it is only necessary to mention here that the first important indication of future development was the arrival of immigrants on the "Bellona." These had been provided with two years' provisions, agricultural implements, and free servants. Their first settlement at Liberty Plains was soon abandoned, and the Hawkesbury selected in its stead. In this year the first attempt to cross the Blue Mountains failed. But at this time

emancipated convicts had entered upon agricultural pursuits, on land granted to them, cereal crops had proved successful, and future food supplies were assured.

The beginning of the nineteenth century marked the first successful exploration by sea, the publication of the "Sydney Gazette," and the inauguration of the sheep-growing industry by Captain John Macarthur. In 1813 the Blue Mountains were crossed by Wentworth, Blaxland and Lawson, and the Bathurst Plains were discovered.

From this time onwards the economic history reveals the conquest and settlement of new lands, and the spread of squatting on waste lands, at first illegal, 1836, then defined by another expression "gentlemen" squatters, a term also used in referring to "gentlemen" farmers.

In 1824, a Legislative Council of five was appointed by Royal Proclamation, later increased to fifteen. In 1842 there was constituted a Legislative body of one house, of thirty-six members, twelve nominated and twenty-four elected. In 1856 Responsible Government was conceded to New South Wales, with two chambers and nominee Ministers.

The period from 1788 to 1839 revealed the enormous undeveloped wealth of the country, convictism was abandoned, and land policy changed from grants to leading men as a reward for service to the community, explorers, and emancipists, to grants to free settlers on application, until successive abuses brought about sales by auction at an upset price, or to the highest bidder at the sale.

The pastoral lands also came under different enactments, at first a fee was charged which enabled new settlers to occupy wastelands, boundaries were usually watersheds of rivers or tributary streams, more or less a "gentleman's agreement." But no security of tenure was provided until the Orders-in-Council of 1847 became law, when runs were taken in specified boundaries, and a rental was determined based on carrying capacity and the lands classified in districts known as settled, intermediate, and unsettled, with further lands "beyond the limit of location." The Orders-in-Council

of 1847 were still in force when New South Wales was granted self-government, and were unchanged when Queensland became a separate colony, and took over all alienated lands in its new borders, as well as all pastoral lands, which in most cases were "beyond the limits of location" of the mother colony. There were then only three settled districts, the Moreton Bay settlement, Darling Downs, and Wide Bay. The local administration was in the hands of Commissioners of Crown Lands.

### **The Pioneer Inter-regnum, 1839-1859**

This could be designated the immigrant era, and the appearance of Alexander McLeay as the representative of Moreton Bay in the pseudo-constitution of 1843, as the Genesis of Queensland. It marked the growth of production and trade of the coastal areas. Free settlers poured into Moreton Bay during those years. Settlement increased, exploitation was active and extensive. Leases of large areas were obtained from the Crown, lessees who resisted all efforts of farmers to occupy small areas for agriculture. Thus arose the conflicting interests—the squatters and the immigrant seeking a home of his own on a small holding; a conflict in which the squatters held the greater influence and power in retaining the protection of the Legislature. In this pioneer period immigration had added to the population, particularly in the arrival of the "Artemisia" in 1848 and the "Fortitude," "Chasely" and "Lima" in 1849. In 1858, a year before Separation, gold had been discovered at Canoona on the Fitzroy River. This field proved a disappointment to many gold-seekers, some of whom remained to find other occupations.

The frontier settlement, also, had followed explorers, and was active and extensive. From the year 1840 (Walter Leslie) squatters had moved westerly and south-westerly to the Maranoa and Warrego, then moving northwards, run after run was applied for and stocked, down the valley of the Dawson, to Peak Downs, and to Leichhardt's Comet River. The pioneering squatters were still pressing northwards. On

November 7, 1848, a new pastoral district was proclaimed for the Wide Bay and Burnett District. Further inland preparations were already under way to follow the track of Leichhardt up the Burdekin River, and also the track of Landsborough into the Gulf country.

At Moreton Bay settlement pastoralists had invaded the Logan and Bremer district, and the Brisbane valley. Farms were established on alienated lands near Brisbane and Ipswich. The Toll Bar road was opened in 1851, giving better access to the Darling Downs.

Ipswich (at the head of navigation of the Brisbane and Bremer rivers) became a thriving centre, with river steamers plying to and from Brisbane. Mr. Fleming established a flour mill with his sawmill near Ipswich; he imported wheat from Adelaide for grinding. Cotton failed to realise the hopes of those who engaged in its production.

Separation was first proposed as a definite objective at a meeting in Brisbane on November 5, 1853. Coote says this was the eighth meeting in favour of separation. The movement was the earnest desire of a radical middle class which demanded a democratic government, especially when it would enable them to contest the monopoly of land and the privileges claimed by large squatting interests. In this they found willing allies from those who were disappointed or frustrated land-seekers. Separation, however, was granted by the Home Government in May, 1859, and on July 10 news was received that an Order-in-Council had been issued. Brisbane was constituted a Municipality by proclamation on September 7.

### Queensland

On December 10, 1859, Governor Sir George Bowen arrived and read the Proclamation inaugurating a new Colony to be called Queensland.

Among the first measures passed by the new parliament, which met on May 22, 1860, were the Crown Lands Act to regulate the occupation of Crown Lands in unsettled districts; Occupation of Crown Lands Act, and the Tenders for Crown Lands Act. The first provided for Crown Lands Commissioners to

deal with all applications for licences to occupy, and in due course a lease for fourteen years to be granted. The second Act was to validate the rights of occupiers and holders of leases at the time of Separation, and the third dealt with tenders applied for under the Order-in-Council of March 19, 1847, some of which were in abeyance when Separation was granted.

Complaints on the administration of these Acts led to the appointment by the Legislative Council of a Select Committee; the result was an amendment of the Acts in the following year. In 1868 provisions were introduced to provide for partial resumption to facilitate closer settlement.

### North Queensland

The discovery of Port Denison in 1859, and the founding of Bowen in 1860, marked the commencement of pastoral development in North Queensland.

In the year 1859 the first settlement of the Burdekin River was due to a well-organised party which left Princhester, north of Rockhampton, on August 15, 1859. In the party, led by G. E. Dalrymple, were Ernest Henry, Henry Stone (surveyor), P. F. Sellheim, Houghton, Hood, and two blackboys. On October 10 they reached Mt. McConnell after many trials and difficulties. Mt. McConnell was taken up by Ernest Henry, Strathmore by P. F. Sellheim, and the Valley of Lagoons by G. E. Dalrymple on behalf of Scott Bros.

On November 1, 1859, hearing that another party was following his tracks, Dalrymple dispatched Ernest Henry and Hood to Rockhampton, the nearest office, to lodge applications for the blocks he had taken up. But these applications came at a time of suspended animation in such matters as Separation was pending, and over a year's delay resulted until the new legislation came into force. Official records are not a sure guide, as jobbing took place in the interim, and names such as Wise, Toussaint, Favenc and others appear in the first official registrations, men who took no active part in exploration.

Dalrymple returned by the way he had come; the result of the expedition was finalised in Sydney on

May 9, 1860. In August of the same year Dalrymple accompanied Lieut. J. W. Smith, in command of the "Spitfire," with Henry Stone, surveyor, and Eugene Fitzalan, botanist, seeking an estuary of the Burdekin River, with negative result. Edward Cunningham's party had in the meantime followed up the Burdekin to the Suttor and Clarke River country and founded Burdekin Downs, Maryvale, and Reedy Plains. With Cunningham were W. P. Stenhouse, Phillip Somer, Michael Miles, and Chris. and Johnston Allingham. James and Charles Cassady led another expedition which crossed the Burdekin in the vicinity of Inkerman and went as far as the Houghton River. Yet another party led by John Melton Black (acting for Robert Towns) founded Woodstock, Dotswood, Victoria Downs, and later Mt. Stuart, part of which became the site of the City of Townsville. Others of the pioneering squatters were the Athertons, Atkinsons, Collins, J. G. McDonald (Carpentaria Downs), the Earls, with many others prominent in extending the pioneer frontier to the Gulf.

### The Coastal Belt

It is interesting to compare the economic development of the coastal towns in North Queensland. First in order being Cardwell (January 1864), Townsville (October 1864). These were established as seaports for the squatters on the Burdekin River and beyond. Cardwell failed to overcome the obstacles to be surmounted for a dray road over the mountainous country. Townsville had a well-watered route for teams, and eventually secured the carrying to the Cape, Winton, Hughenden, the Upper Burdekin and the Lynd. Though situated on an unfertile plain, the rich lands of the Houghton River and the Burdekin Delta to the south, and the Lower Herbert to the north were tapped by road, and later by tram to Ayr, and railway to Ingham. From the first establishment of the town, small steamers supplied the needs of settlers at Barratta and Plantation Creeks to the south, and Dungeness, Cardwell, Clump Point, Liverpool Creek, Mourilyan Harbour, Geraldton, Russell River and Cairns to the north.

Cooktown (1873), Cairns (1876) and Port Douglas (1877) served the mining interests of the hinterland.

Before they became settled, or very soon after, timber-getters had worked the pine and cedar stands at the Bloomfield, Daintree, Mossman, Barron, Mulgrave and the Johnstone rivers. With the decline of alluvial gold production at the Palmer, Cooktown lost much of its prosperity, and in fact faded away to a shadow. Cairns was more fortunate as with the decline of gold production, tin was discovered at Herberton and district, and mining generally was being actively carried on. Silver lead, wolfram, antimony and copper were among the metals which yielded good returns, but were subject to fluctuating prices which affected their output. There was a lack of permanence in mining, as was the case with timber-getting when the easy-won supplies were exhausted, and towns on the mining fields once reasonably prosperous declined or closed down completely. Port Douglas lost the value of its connection to the back country due to its superior road, when Cairns secured its railway to Mareeba in 1893. Cairns moved forward rapidly with its magnificent harbour facilities and the railway construction boom, until the financial crisis of 1893.

### **The Sugar Industry**

At the beginning of 1882 speculators in the south became interested in sugar-growing at Cairns. Large areas of land were secured from the Barron River to the Russell, which the Government had offered for selection to encourage land settlement.

The Lower Herbert had been first settled in 1871, and steadily progressed under a system of small mills, and in 1876 had overcome initial difficulties, and developed into a thriving district.

In 1881 a sugar mill was established at Hop Wah, four miles from Cairns, but the situation was ill-chosen in an area limited by swamps. Due to this and primitive machinery, and unskilled management, it closed down in 1886. At Hambledon, Swallow and Derham took up some seven square miles of country in 1882, commenced under better auspices with machinery from England, tramline to a wharf on the inlet, and preparation of the land for intense cultivation.

The Pyramid Mill on the Mulgrave had a short and

chequered existence and came into the hands of the banks about 1888. The land was afterwards subdivided and sold.

The locking-up of such large areas retarded development, and it was not till the passing of the Sugar Works Guraantee Act of 1893 that this land was unlocked and the Central Sugar Mill at the Mulgrave was founded, followed some years afterwards by the Babinda Mill. Meantime, Hambledon had come into the hands of the C.S.R. Co. Ltd., and as the principle of small suppliers had been proved so successful, the land was sold to farmer-suppliers, the buyers in most cases being financed by the company.

To-day the various mill-tramway lines extend from the Barron to the Russell, constant feeders to the three great sugar-mills, Hambledon, Mulgrave and Babinda. At each of these mills a small satellite town came into being.

### **The Tableland**

From Mareeba, the Cairns railway was continued to Atherton in 1903, later in 1911 to Herberton, its first objective when the first sod was turned in 1886.

Up to the period when the line reached Atherton closer settlement was only apparent within a short distance of the roads in existence since 1882. Selectors in most cases had leased the land at Tolga (Martintown) and Atherton to Chinese for maize growing.

But from the year 1908 onwards, thousands of acres were thrown open for selection. Settlers arrived from places as far as Illawarra and the northern districts of New South Wales, bringing with them the foundations of dairy herds, and a pioneering spirit that remained undaunted and reaped a rich reward.

A branch railway from Tolga to Malanda later continued to Millaa-Millaa, and the tapping of the Evelyn Tableland by a railway extension from Herberton to Ravenshoe unlocked further lands and incidentally released large reserves of timber.

The maize silo, numerous butter factories, thriving townships and well-made roads all testify to the wealth of the Tablelands. At Mareeba, two separate attempts had been made early in its history to establish a



brewery, but in each case met with no success. In later years the Barton Brewery at Cairns succeeded, the reputation of the Cairns beer has continued during all the years it has been in operation. In the late nineties, when the cattle men were passing through a bad time with the tick outbreak and low prices, the Biboohra Meat Works carried on till better prices for stock obviated the necessity for boiling down. Two large sawmills operated for many years, and cattle sales and trucking yards made a permanent contribution to its prosperity. The culture and manufacture of tobacco came in 1930, first as a struggle by small growers, until irrigation on a large scale provided the solution of one of the major problems of a district just outside the rain-forest belt. One of the finest long-range undertakings ever constructed in Queensland is nearing fulfilment at the Tinaroo Dam.

Electric light and power has been conveyed from the hydro-electric works at the Barron Falls, and further economic development will shortly be apparent in the completion of the hydro works at the Tully Falls.

Not the least of the modern developments, the tourist trade, while not within the scope of this paper deserves some mention. This has grown to a most important position in the North, and contributes in a large measure to the prosperity of the people. The extension of reservation of areas as National Parks is not the least achievement in encouragement of tourists, by preserving the natural beauties of the rain-forests, of mountain and waterfall. But in the economic field, the conservation of timber wealth is no doubt of the greatest national importance.

*Acknowledgements—*

*Shaw "Economic Development Aust."*

*Aldine "Jubilee History Queensland."*

*"Queensland Year Book 1901."*

*"Our First Half Century Q. Govt., 1909."*