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## THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF AGRICULTURE IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

by

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(This is the third of a series of essays by the author under the general title here shown. The first two essays were published in the August, 1948, issue of this Review.)

### 3. THE TRAVESTY OF SMALL LAND SETTLEMENT WITHIN A MONOPOLY ENVIRONMENT [1792-1810].

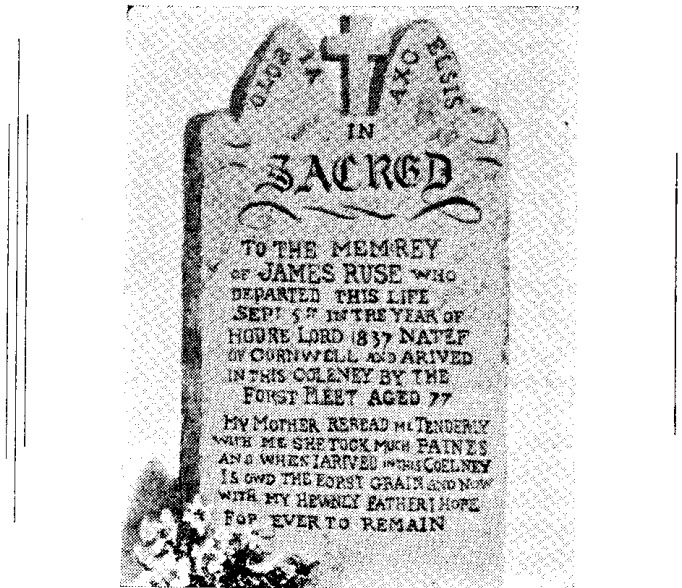
The Colony fell on difficult days, following the departure of Phillip. Between the end of 1792, when Phillip left, and late 1809, when Macquarie arrived, the New South Wales Corps was the garrison of the settlement, its officers the trader-monopolists and unofficial arbiters of the destinies of the State. These seventeen years have been extensively discussed and analysed in the standard histories, and in particular in such other works as "Run Rebellion" by Dr. H. V. Evatt. It is, nevertheless, necessary if the trend of argument in this study is to be followed to examine, if briefly only, the effect which the years of monopoly exerted in deciding the future of the Colony. Mention should be made, for example, of the rise of the officer-farmer-trader-monopolists and the early alienation of the lands of the Colony, for some of these officers of the Corps, the "Big-wigs" as they were later called, men such as John Macarthur, accumulated fortunes in these years, which were later used to found the sheep and wool industry. Moreover, it is hardly possible to understand the destitution of the emancipist farmers of the Macquarie regime, unless the constant difficulties to which they were subjected throughout the years preceding are understood. There emerges, in the immediate years after Phillip's departure, the first glimmerings of the later problem in the Colony, small peasant farming versus a "capitalist" agriculture.

Phillip's idea had been to settle emancipists on small blocks of land and to encourage, as well as he could, a peasant agriculture, combining with such a measure a public agriculture, also, on what were virtually government farms. This experiment by the Governor was, however, never carried to a conclusion. In 1790 and 1791 the New South Wales Corps had been raised in England, for service in the Colony and to relieve the unsatisfactory marine garrison. The greater part of the Corps, in fact, arrived by the second fleet in Phillip's time. Phillip's successor, Hunter, however, did not arrive until 1795 and there was thus an interim of three years, during which the Corps through its commanding officers, Grose and Paterson, ruled the Colony. The first thing which Grose speedily effected was to merge the civil and military governments together. Thereafter, with no restraints on their power, these two men, and thus the officers under them, gained, in this way, a taste for governing on the small scale and of using the resources of government to serve their own private interests. The history of the Colony, for the next fifteen years, is essentially

a series of struggles for the mastery, between the governor on the one hand, and the Corps on the other, not to be finally solved until 1810 and Macquarie's arrival, with a regiment of his own to displace the Corps.

Due to the fact that the Colony was so isolated, there were extraordinary fluctuations in the value of most articles of domestic consumption for many years after the original establishment. The simple laws of supply and demand then ruled with a peculiar vehemence; scarcity was a constant. Correspondingly, extraordinary profits were not infrequently realised on the investment of a small capital in ordinary speculation. This afforded the officers of the Corps, given the opportunity to do so, both a temptation and an excuse for endeavouring to eke out their military income, which was often inadequate enough, by engaging either directly or indirectly in such speculations. The position which they occupied afforded them singular advantages in this respect, for as the Commissariat store contained whatever was supposed to be necessary for the comfortable subsistence of the settlement, there were ways and means of procuring from that source occasional articles at prime cost, which could afterwards be retailed at considerable profit. The most frequently requisitioned article was, naturally, that which was most plentiful and for which there was the greatest demand, and this was rum. In process of time, it came to be established as a general rule, that there should be certain periodical issues of rum (as, for example, on the arrival of a merchant ship) to the officers of the Corps, in quantities proportioned to the rank of each officer (<sup>1</sup>). The profits were so tempting that soon the officers became the only buyers and sellers in the Colony. The officers were given the first sight of the manifest of any ship arriving in the harbour and the choice of her cargo. Without much difficulty they were able to keep the trade within the closed combination of their own interests, and to freeze out the free or emancipated convict trader. Inevitably, all the picked items from the cargoes, such as tea and other Indian or Chinese products, West India rum, Bengal arrack and soft goods or hardware of British manufacture, had a habit of coming into their hands. Retail trade was, in the meantime, variously managed (<sup>2</sup>). Most of the non-commissioned officers had licences to sell spirits, and in this way the superfluous rum of the regiment was disposed of to greatest advantage. Furthermore, selected servants such as Simeon Lord and Samuel Terry, afterwards wealthy traders on their own account, were set up in small shops. All in all, the monopoly so established was vicious in the extreme, breeding with the wealth so easily acquired profligacy and dissoluteness in those benefiting by the trade, and depressing to the lowest levels of misery the unfortunate balance of the population, including the farmers, caught up in the cogs of the monopoly traffic (<sup>3</sup>). The struggle of Hunter and King, and after them, Bligh, was against this Corps monopoly and the officers' favoured position. The fact is that they were not strong enough to break it, and this early episode of Australian history finally closes with the Corps actually deposing the last of the naval governors and attempting to establish a rule of its own.

It remains for just a few of the elements in this struggle to receive a brief consideration, and in particular for note to be taken of the influence exercised by the rum sellers in gaining, for a time, monopoly of the stores of the Commissariat and of available convict labour for their own private agricultural and other ventures. Finally, some attention may be given to the extension of land settlement, proceeding concurrently.



THE GRAVESTONE OF JAMES RUSE—AUSTRALIA'S PIONEER AGRICULTURIST  
(1760-1837.)

Ruse is buried in St. John's churchyard, Campbelltown, N.S.W., where this grave stone still stands. Born in Cornwall, England, in 1760, Ruse was one of the original "First Fleeters." His seven-year sentence of transportation expired in 1789, whereupon Phillip set him up to farm on his own account at Parramatta. In 1793, Ruse sold this farm to Surgeon John Harris, and in January, 1794, he began to clear a 30-acre grant near Mulgrave Place on the Hawkesbury, where he resided for many years. In 1810 he was a Constable at Windsor. He died in 1837.

[By courtesy, Royal Aust. Historical Society.]

### Monopoly and its Effects.

When Grose took office, in December, 1792, the Colony of New South Wales consisted of 4,000 people, including nearly 200 farmers on about 8,000 acres of cleared land, of which a quarter was in cultivation (<sup>4</sup>). This was Phillip's achievement, and the way had been shown for further progressive settlement. By the time the monopoly racket had finished, however, much of the wealth in the Colony had come to be accumulated into the hands of a small clique of self-seekers, and whilst a further expansion of settlement had been made, the majority of the farmers were poor and close to destitution.

The new era for the Corps was heralded when, a few weeks following Grose's assumption of the reins of Government, Christmas Eve, 1792, he purchased the spirits and cargo of provisions of the *Hope*, the second American vessel to call at Sydney (<sup>5</sup>).

Grose, on 9th January, 1793, in a despatch to Dundas, stated that the American captain had made it known that he had both spirits and foodstuffs for sale, should these be needed in the Colony (<sup>6</sup>). The purchase had been duly made, for fear lest the crops should fail through the drought then prevailing, and because of a desire to guard against the delay which often attended the receipt of goods from England. By making this purchase, Grose claimed "to have augmented the quantity of provisions in the Colony to seven months at the established ration." In after years, much the same reasoning would be used to explain the necessity for purchases from chance callers. In a Colony where everything was in short supply, this must explain, also, the impossible position in which the Governors were placed, in denying to importers the right to land goods desperately required. Soon, officers were chartering ships to fetch cargoes to Port Jackson, for sale at profits ranging from 500 to 1,000 per cent., and monopoly was at once established (<sup>7</sup>). It may be noted that although Grose had received instructions so early as June 1793, from the Secretary of State, to prevent "the secret and clandestine sale of spirits, by subjecting such sale to the view and inspection of proper persons directed by you to attend them," the rum-selling business had grown so large, by 1811, that a governor had to bargain with the rum-ring in order to finance the building of Sydney Hospital (<sup>8</sup>). Monopoly grew because the Colony was largely neglected by the British Government and was left to fend, more or less, for itself, over the years of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Perhaps it had been overlooked, nevertheless the facts were to prove that more things are necessary for a struggling pioneer community than land to till and air to breathe. The surprising thing concerning these early years of monopoly is not that they developed, but that the trade flourished, notwithstanding the opposition of the naval governors and the authorities at home. The surprise is lessened, however, if it be realised that of the early colonists only the officers, or some of them, had credit abroad; that every artifice and subterfuge was used in the trade to defeat the orders made; that the governors had really no power to discipline the rum sellers; and that the British Government was distracted by events overseas from giving necessary attention to the Colony's needs.

An insight into what monopoly meant, as it came to be established in the years following 1792, may be gathered from the reliable David Collins, Phillip's Judge Advocate. "Many of the inferior farmers," he wrote, "were ruined by the high price they were obliged to give for such necessaries as they required, from those who had been long in the habit of monopolising every article brought to the settlers for sale; a habit of which it was found impossible to get the better without the positive and immediate interference of the government at home" (<sup>9</sup>). And again: "Their (the settlers) crops were no sooner gathered than they were instantly disposed of for spirits, which they purchased at the rate of £3, nay even £4 per gallon—a spirit, too, often lowered one-fourth or more of its strength with water" (<sup>10</sup>). The grinding monopoly set up through the dealings of the rum sellers debased the local agriculture, and increased the vicious cycle by which continued imports were necessary. No doubt, if the

Colony had been self-sufficient in foodstuffs, a great deal might have been done to curb the traffic but, from 1796 onwards, a continuous stream of vessels visited Sydney, unloading provisions as well as other goods because of the acute scarcity which often prevailed, sometimes approaching even to famine <sup>(11)</sup>. The small farmers were, in such an environment, deprived of all hopes of bettering their positions by honest industry, and since without hope there cannot be any real urge to exertion, there was induced in their ranks a "spirit of recklessness that led to unbounded dissipation" <sup>(12)</sup>. Notwithstanding King's exertions to curb the traffic in spirits, Dunmore Lang was afterwards informed "by a respectable colonist who arrived in the Colony at this period (sometime between 1800 and 1806)" that "the population of New South Wales (then) consisted chiefly of those who sold rum and of those who drank it" <sup>(13)</sup>. The general maxim of the Colony, so it was said, consisted in "making money, if you can, but by all means make money" <sup>(14)</sup>. A further insight into the general position is given in the evidence by Maurice Margarot—one of the Scotch martyrs—before the 1812 Select Committee on Transportation <sup>(15)</sup>. When asked whether the officers, to whom the government of the Colony was entrusted, had embarked in trade, his reply was "All of them to a man!" At some length, he went on to explain that the trade with which they were concerned had consisted in both monopoly and, what was worse, extortion, including all the necessaries of life brought to the Colony, and embracing a hold upon the Commissariat stores of such items as wheat, pork, beef and mutton supplies. When from India, Great Britain, or other parts of Europe, ships arrived, the whole cargoes were bought up and then resold at exorbitant prices, with as much as 500 per cent. profit whether the goods were spirits or such other times as tea, sugar, clothing, soft goods or hardware. The trading was all embracing, including everything for which a demand existed in the Colony. But, what was worse, the traders were favoured in government supplies as well. In cases where general store items such as sieves, hats, clothes, linen, coarse cloth and general issue goods were sent out to the Colony by the Home Government, for general distribution purposes, the officers were given an entree into the stores, within a few days of their receipt. In a short time, they "laid their hands on everything of value . . . (had) their names affixed to it as purchasers . . . and they (left) nothing but the refuse for the Colony . . . having done so by themselves or by their agents, they then . . . (retailed) at 500 per cent. profit." He instanced cases of rum, bought at 7s. 6d. per gallon, being afterwards sold at £3 3s. per gallon, and of sieves, purchased at 5s. 9d., being retailed for £3 3s. A combination bond had been entered into by the officer rum sellers in 1797, "neither to underbuy nor undersell, the one to the other." The close co-operation was such that "if any one officer was offended, the whole Corps was involved," and, since this was the *esprit de corps* of the combination, "any poor prisoner that had the misfortune to offend any one officer, would be sure to get a flogging from some other." It is needless to follow the traffic further, for sufficient can be gained from these references to understand the general nature of the conditions at the time.

### Rum Ring Conspiracy.

The unfortunate Hunter was the first man called upon to remedy the abuses. Hunter, (1795-1800), logically, had seen that the only way of controlling the power of the officers was to relieve or disband the Corps, and it is significant that he did make such a recommendation <sup>(16)</sup>. It is interesting to note that some time afterwards a large body of marines was actually under orders to embark for the Colony, but the war with France changed the destination and their services were requisitioned for more immediate work at home <sup>(17)</sup>. Under Hunter, the Commissary, James Williamson, was an accessory of the monopoly ring, William Balmain the Principal Surgeon was a leading member of the combination and he, and at least one of his subordinates, D'arcy Wentworth, were active like John Macarthur, the Inspector of Public Works, in supplying the lowly with rum at extortionate prices <sup>(18)</sup>. And, whilst a score or so of officers made money hand over fist, settlers by scores were ruined, crops were mortgaged to buy bread, bankrupts were thrown back on Government rations and ground went out of cultivation <sup>(19)</sup>. Hunter, in 1798, felt that his efforts were so far ineffectual in controlling the extortionate prices that he wrote home that "unless some mode is established for putting an effectual stop to the trading of the officers and others, and consequently to the immense prices . . . instead of our cultivation increasing, I fear we shall raise less grain every year" <sup>(20)</sup>. The fact, that the farmers were leaving the land was made abundantly clear by the report of the Commissioners of Enquiry (Rev. Samuel Marsden and Thomas Arndell) later in the year <sup>(21)</sup>. They found that debt had overcome four of the sixteen peasants at Parramatta—all who remained of Phillip's original settlers were the sixteen—and that in the six mainland districts, only twenty-one held their holdings, of seventy-three whom Phillip had planted. Of those that had been ruined, many were "sober and industrious . . . the falling landed interest was declining because of the high prices of all goods." It had been the general retail monopoly which had driven many from their farms. The case was, moreover, that no public farming had been done since 1792. Convicts impressed from the old public farms had helped the monopolists to riches. "Had those who have been so improperly disposed of been employed on Government's land already cleared," wrote Hunter, "and in clearing more for the benefit of the public, I do not hesitate to say there would not now have been the occasion to purchase so much grain as we find at this time unavoidable; but had that been the case, it would have ruined the expectation of officers and settlers whose interest appears to have been more considered" <sup>(22)</sup>. Hunter was without assistance to curb the trading and other malpractices of the officers, and therein lies the probable reason for the futility of the regulations and orders which he promulgated. The Secretary of State had found the officers' commercial practices "contrary, as you very properly observe, to the nature of their institution," but was at a loss to suggest to the Governor specific means to put a stop to them, suffering under the delusion, apparently, that the Governor's authority to discipline the officers of the Corps was absolute, whereas in fact it was non-existent.

When King took over from the harassed Hunter, in 1800, he attempted to assail the bastions of the Corps' privileged position, but, like Hunter, he too was forced to say "Where can I look to for support but to myself? For it can hardly be expected that those will promote plans of industry, when the success must prove the infamy of their own conduct" (23). He had to find some means of imposing his will, other than by the issue of mere regulations. He had Paterson (administrator in 1795, now Lieutenant-Colonel commanding the Corps) arrest Captain George Johnston, Hunter's aide, for having paid a servant of the Corps his military pay in the form of rum, over-valued at 24s. a gallon compared with 10s. a gallon at the ship (24). Then, Williamson, the dishonest Commissary, having resigned, he reorganised the Commissariat (25). Following this, he cashiered William Cox for defalcations, whilst acting as Paymaster of the Corps (26). His crowning achievement, however, was to have Macarthur arrested on the pretext of a duel with Paterson and sent home to England for trial. The combination of the Corps was in this way divided, and opportunity provided for at least some reforms. Significantly enough, two of the officers, Balmain and Wentworth, possibly frightened by the sweeping reforms of the Governor, voluntarily disclosed that they had imported 1,400 and 3,000 gallons of spirit, respectively, for sale and offered the rum to Government at £1 per gallon (27). King gave them permission to retail the spirit, on condition that they did not engage in any further speculation.

Such successes did not, however, lull King into a belief that he had made a permanent breach in the officers' position. Probably he realised that conditions must be changed, as well as personnel, before the inducements of public service in Australia would be other than the opportunity which public service offered "to impose on the public and to join in sharing the immense profits that have been made of the shameful monopolies that have so long existed here, and which have been uniformly applied to the misery and ruin of the labouring settlers" (28). The Colonial Office sought to help him towards the fulfilment of his task by permitting ship's officers to bring out goods to New South Wales for sale at prices up to a maximum fixed by the Governor. King allowed a substantial trade to develop in this way, because he was convinced the Colony needed supplies, and because he believed that the power of the monopolists could best be broken by permitting residents outside the combine to purchase goods, whenever opportunity offered (29). He built a new Government store, contracted with Robert Campbell, a private merchant, to import cattle from India on behalf of government and purchased the whole cargo of at least one ship, the *John Jay*, part of which was resold at very nearly the same prices to every class of people who had the wherewithal to purchase it. King later said that these individual purchases from the *John Jay* had "enabled every one to supply their own wants and was the first blow to destroy the monopolists" (30).

Unfortunately, there was one avenue of supply, however, that the Governors, with the inadequate resources at their disposal, could not control, and this was smuggling. The results were that



the introduction of contraband spirits undid much of the good effected by other regulations <sup>(31)</sup>. King's achievement may be best summed up by stating that one of the reasons given for his eventual recall in 1806 was because of "the unfortunate differences which have so long subsisted between you and the military officers of the Colony" <sup>(32)</sup>. If there had not been such differences, this would have been the measure of his failure to do anything to curb the monopoly traffic.

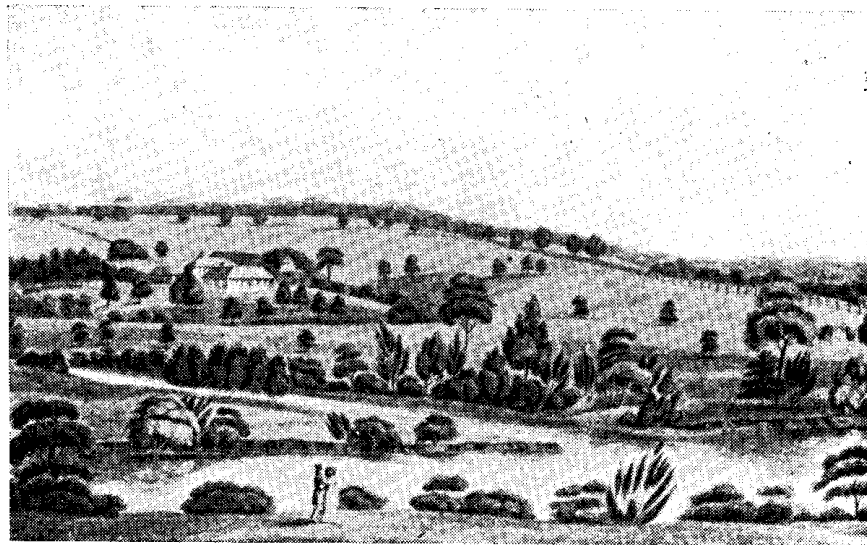
Within four days of King's departure from the Colony, on 10th February, 1807, Bligh, his successor, issued a regulation against the use of rum as currency, but within a year, he, too, was removed from office by the New South Wales Corps. There were then more than 700 small farmers in the Colony. Nearly 400 of the 700 had publicly repudiated an address which Macarthur, "for the free settlers," had presented to Bligh on his arrival <sup>(33)</sup>. After the Rum Corps' rebellion they objected, with an equal vehemence, to Macarthur's appointment to be Secretary to the Colony, in the *de facto* government set up by the mutineers, holding that "We believe John Macarthur has been the scourge of this Colony by fomenting quarrels between His Majesty's officers, servants and subjects," and that "His monopoly and extortion have been highly injurious to the inhabitants of every description" <sup>(34)</sup>.

Monopoly provides the background to the agricultural developments of the seventeen years between Phillip's departure and Macquarie's arrival. Probably, if any farmer of the period had been asked what were his greatest difficulties in all these years, his reply would have related to the high prices which he was called upon to pay for everything that he required, the rigging of the Commissariat market, the unfair distribution of labour, the perpetual scarcity which for so long prevailed, and no doubt he would have mentioned also the floods on the rivers—particularly the "calamitous inundation of 1806." And, as it has been seen, not a few of these were bound up in the monopoly exercised by a little coterie of the officers of the local garrison over most that was profitable for trade within the colony. The agricultural developments over these same years should be now examined.

#### **Processes of Agricultural Settlement, 1792-1809.**

On Phillip's departure from the Colony, the native agriculture was twofold. There were 1,000 acres of ground in cultivation on the public account, 800 of which were in maize and the rest in wheat and barley. This was at Parramatta and a new settlement, Toongabbie, that had been established three miles to the west of Parramatta <sup>(35)</sup>. Additionally, sixty-eight settlers, including fifty-three ex-convicts and one pardoned convict, were settled at Parramatta, and 104 at Norfolk Island, including forty-eight ex-convicts. Roughly, 1,703½ acres were under cultivation, on account of both government and farmers. No sooner was the *Atlantic* carrying the Governor out of sight, wrote Collins, some time afterwards, "than the major part of the stock which had been issued to the settlers were offered for sale, and there was little doubt that had they not been bought by the officers, in a very

few weeks most of them would have been destroyed" (36). Grose, reporting on this, in probably the first thing he had to do with agricultural affairs, stated that "I was absolutely obliged to encourage and promote the purchase of them by the officers, dreading that, without this precaution, the dissipation of a week would effectually exterminate a stock that had been the work of years to collect" (37). Shortly afterwards, also, he reported that he had "allotted to such officers as had asked, one hundred acres of land, which with great spirit they, at their own expense, are



ELIZABETH FARM, PARRAMATTA—JOHN MACARTHUR'S MANSION.

The original of this print is a beautiful coloured engraving in a collection published by J. Lycett in 1825, and dedicated to Governor Brisbane. In the foreword Lycett refers to himself as sometime artist to Lachlan Macquarie. The view here shown is the estate and residence of Macarthur. Whereas the estate has gone, the farmhouse still stands and is at present occupied. Lycett's annotation of this engraving deserves a quotation:

"There are several houses in this remote part of the Globe, which may challenge comparison with some of the country residences of the gentry of England; and among them, perhaps, few have greater claims than the one here represented. Its situation is truly delightful, being upon a gentle rise of ground, about a quarter of a mile from the river which flows from Sydney to Parramatta. It commands a pleasing view of the country on the opposite side of the water, and is about a quarter of a mile from the end of the town of Parramatta, which is partially seen from it. The land around the house and by the river is cleared of stumps, and is mown in the hay season as in England. A very considerable quantity of land lies over the higher ground, by the waterside, towards Sydney, which affords excellent pasturage for sheep, cattle and horses. But the extensive flocks of merino sheep belonging to Mr. Macarthur are kept at his principal estate, called Camden, on the banks of the Nepean, and about twenty-five miles distant from Parramatta. The grounds and gardens here represented contain the choicest fruits and productions of Europe and of tropical climates, among which may be enumerated the orange, lemon, lime, citron, cocoa, olive, grape, fig, peach, apricot, nectarine, mulberry and almond. At the extremity of Mr. Macarthur's ground, which is nearly enclosed by the river and by a creek flowing from it, there are great numbers of wild fowl, particularly wild ducks; and abundance of quails are bred and are to be found upon the estate."

[*Mitchell Library.*]

clearing . . . Their efforts are really astonishing, and I absolutely expect, if they continue as they began, that in the space of six months the officers will have a tract in cultivation more than equal to a third of all that has been cleared in the Colony. As I am aware, they are at this time the only description of settlers on whom reliance can be placed, I shall encourage their pursuit as much as is in my power" (38).

These two statements are worth emphasizing, for here can be seen the reasons why, in the succeeding years, there developed a monopoly in stock breeding among the few men with capital in the country, and the reasons why land was freely alienated amongst the Corps officers. Macarthur, independently, in 1796 submitted to Portland, then Colonial Secretary, a viewpoint which carries these ideas of Grose one stage further (39). He put forward that the Colony could be made self-supporting and so relieve the Imperial Government of much expense. Farming, which was the means of self-sufficiency, ought not to be undertaken as a public enterprise. The individual farmer should be able after eighteen months to keep his assigned servants in bread, for a man required but twelve bushels a year for his consumption, and, here, the harvest would return fifteen bushels per acre. The cultivation of a single acre, therefore, would ensure the satisfaction of one man's needs. But, in New South Wales, the farmers were either on poorly selected sites, or they were idle and dissolute. "Had these men," continued Macarthur, "instead of being permitted to become settlers, been obliged to employ themselves in the service of an industrious and vigilant master, they would now be feeding themselves and providing a surplus." As it was, the Commissariat bought grain in excessive quantities, and there was waste in other ways also. These are among the first signs that are to be seen of a conflict of views within the Colony concerning its ultimate development. On the one side, the Phillip pattern of small peasant farmers, associated with public farming, to augment produce grown and to absorb surplus convicts not yet entitled by expiration of their servitude to be given blocks of land; on the other, exploitation by moneyed men of convict labour, with the abandonment of public farming enterprise. It is this issue which constantly arises in the following years. The theories underlying the quickened enclosure movement of late eighteenth century England were already finding their parallel so early in the infant settlement of New South Wales. It may be here interesting to note that Macarthur, a quarter of a century later, was still representing to authority that men once convicted should be forever quelled and that transported convicts ought to be handed over to large proprietors, "intelligent and honourable men" (40). As he put it, if this was not done then "the democratic multitude would look upon their large possessions with envy and the proprietors with hatred. As this democratic feeling had already taken deep root in the Colony, in consequence of the absurd and mischievous policy pursued by Governor Macquarie, and as there is already a strong combination amongst that class of persons, it cannot too soon be opposed with vigour."

An attempt was made to test this theory in the three years of the Grose and Paterson administrations. By April, 1793, ten of Grose's officers, including Macarthur, were equipped with small grants of land, and before the end of 1793, large numbers of convicts had been withdrawn from the public farmlands and impressed into the service of the farmer officers (<sup>41</sup>). Toongabbie and Parramatta were allowed to go out of cultivation, and part of the public cleared lands alienated. The farmer officers were soon placed in the fortunate position that they were allowed to pay wages in spirits, to sell their produce to the Commissariat, and to receive back from the store, allowances or property in kind to feed their bond labourers. All that was then required was direction, and a system was soon fashioned, highly profitable to perhaps one in two hundred of the colonial population and oppressive or ruinous to the one hundred and ninety-nine. In May, 1793, officer-settlers at Sydney and Parramatta had 452 acres of farmland (<sup>42</sup>). In Grose's first return of land grants for the period 31st December, 1792, to 1st April, 1793, there are shown 400 acres granted to five Bellona free immigrants, 190 acres to five ex-pees, 160 acres to two ex-marines and 725 acres to ten officers (including 100 acres to Macarthur), a total of 1,575 acres to twenty-two persons. In alienating the Crown lands, Grose, and after him, Paterson, were not, however, guilty of any real excess. Phillip's grants, in all probability, totalled 8,000 acres. Grose in his turn gave a little more than 10,000 acres, Paterson less than 5,000 acres (<sup>43</sup>). By late April, 1794, in announcing the results of his achievements, Grose was able to state that the officers had nearly 1,000 acres in cultivation, and that because of the officers' exertions, enough grain would be available to tide the Colony over until the next harvest (<sup>44</sup>). The intention of the Governor in making some of these grants had been to form a chain of farms between Parramatta and Sydney, the free settlers being, for instance, set up at Liberty Plains, somewhere on the present site of Strathfield. All told, between 1792 and September, 1795, when Hunter took over, Grose and Paterson added about one hundred to Phillip's list of more than one hundred and seventy farmers, the settlers, by late 1795, farming perhaps double the Phillip acreage of 1792 (<sup>45</sup>).

There is little to be noted in these three years which is of significance, except the beginnings of farming by the officers. The fact that by April, 1794, they were cultivating close to 1,000 acres is an instance of considerable labour. Stock raising was maintained as a closed business. "The live stock in the country," wrote Collins, "belonging to individuals was confined to three or four persons, who kept up the price in order to create an interest in the preservation of it. An English cow, in calf, was sold by one officer to another for £80, and the calf which proved a male was sold for £15. A mare, though aged and defective, had been sold for £40. But it must be remarked, however, that in these sales, stock itself was generally the currency of the country, one kind of animal being commonly exchanged for another" (<sup>46</sup>). About the middle of January, 1794, one small cow and one Bengal steer, both private property were killed and issued to the N.C.O's., and privates of two companies of the Corps (<sup>47</sup>). This was the

third time only that fresh meat had been tasted by the Colonials. The two goat-like animals together weighed 372 lb. and the meat was sold at 1s. 6d. per lb. Something, alas, may be noted of the "improvidence" of the settlers, a complaint to be continually repeated in the years which followed. Collins, in January, 1794, observed that "It was found that the settlers, notwithstanding the plentiful crops which in general they might be said to have gathered, gave no assistance by sending any into store. They appeared to be most sedulously endeavouring to get rid of their grain in any way they could—some by brewing and distilling it; some by baking it into bread, and indulging their own propensities in eating; others in paying debts contracted by gaming—even the farms themselves were pledged and lost in this way—these very farms which undoubtedly were capable of furnishing them with an honest, comfortable maintenance for life" (48). Of all the settled areas, Prospect Hill was found to be the most productive, "Some grounds having returned thirty bushels of wheat for one" (48A). Next to Prospect Hill, came the Northern Boundary farms. Of considerable importance for the well-being of the future Colony, was the settlement of the Hawkesbury, by Ruse and Williams, two farmers who had sold their lands. Altogether, twenty-nine men took up land, just at and above the junction of South Creek with the Hawkesbury, close to where modern Windsor now stands (49).

In this atmosphere, meantime, of the common routines of clearing, cultivating and harvesting, the officers were perfecting their monopoly over the common necessities. Under Hunter, further progressive settlement continued. On his assumption of power, in 1795, there were about 3,000 acres in cultivation. This was increased to about 4,000 acres, a year later; 5,000 acres, by the end of 1797; 6,000 acres, by the end of 1798; to nearly 8,000 by 1800, when he was relieved by King (49A). Hunter's predicament was that he had to keep down expenses and at the same time maintain the prison agriculture. Shann says of this position that "it made an uneasy and divided duty." Hunter soon found "two distinct interests in the Colony—that of the public, and that of the private individual," and found himself single-handed and alone in caring for the public interest (50). The officers were making the times, for themselves, extremely profitable. An instance of this is given by Collins, dealing with the misuse of the Commissariat Stores: "The delivery of grain into the public storehouses, when open for that purpose, was so completely monopolised that the settlers had but few opportunities of getting full value for their crops . . . The settler found himself thrust out from the granary by a man whose greater opulence created greater influence" (51). The excluded settler, continues Collins, was forced to sell his grain, at half the Commissariat price, to the settler who had ousted him, upon which the sharp practitioner resold the peasants' grain to the public store at the full fixed price. In this way, two or three men, out of the scores of settlers in the Hawkesbury district, supplied the whole of 1,500 bushels for which a market was announced in 1798. The results were that "The poverty of the settlers, and the high price of labour, occasioned much land to have been unemployed in 1800.

Many of the inferior farmers were nearly ruined by the high price that they were obliged to give for such necessaries as they required, from those who had long been in the habit of monopolising every article brought to the settlement for sale" (<sup>52</sup>).

Actual farming was full of ups and downs. A happy circumstance had been the finding of the lost cattle in November, 1795, contentedly grazing at the Cow Pastures. The crop of the December following (1795) was in general, bad, Collins noting that "the wheat being almost everywhere mixed with a weed named by the farmers, drake, and that it had been occasioned by the ground being overwrought, from a greediness to make it produce golden harvests every season, without allowing it time to recoup itself from crop to crop, or being unable to afford manure" (<sup>53</sup>). The total harvest of wheat, public and private, was expected to amount to between 35,000 and 40,000 bushels—sufficient for twelve months consumption—exclusive of maize (<sup>54</sup>). But, the significant thing to notice is that more than half of this produce was raised by the officers "at a very considerable expense to each of them, in addition to the aid afforded by Government" (<sup>55</sup>). In Macarthur's case, as an illustration, he had by then 400 to 500 acres, 120 acres of which was laid down to wheat, fifty head of cattle, a dozen horses, and about 1,000 sheep, and he was using the first plough in the colony (<sup>56</sup>). Values were for a horse £140—"be it never so bad it never sells for less than £100"—£80 for a cow, with wheat selling at 10s. a bushel to the store (<sup>57</sup>). An insight into the general position can be further gained from the fact that in 1797 an officer, "returning to England to bring his lady and family to settle, sold stock to the sum of £2,600 and retained his large cultivated estate" (<sup>58</sup>). Hunter's term of office culminated in a drought. The January, 1799, harvest was a failure, the wheat proving little better than chaff, and the maize being burnt into the ground for want of rain (<sup>59</sup>). Writing to Portland, on 1st May, 1799, Hunter stated "that there had been no rain for ten months. the whole country was in a blaze of fire, pasturages were for the time being destroyed, and streams of fresh water had dried up."

It is here relevant to sum up the agricultural achievement as matters then stood in 1800. In the first place, there was a stranglehold on the Commissariat. Hunter, writing home in 1800, had been forced to conclude: "I cannot wonder at the settlers . . . supposing that I have no real wish to relieve them, when time after time my endeavours to that end are frustrated by an inattention to the orders so often given out, and that by the very people to whom they are directed in the Commissary Department" (<sup>60</sup>). Outside the Commissariat, the poor farmer was no better off, nor his servant: "When the labouring man receives his hire in wheat he goes to the publican to obtain articles in exchange. It is then observed to him with a sneer, 'I don't want wheat, but I'll take yours at seven shillings and sixpence a bushel, and give you tobacco at fifteen shillings. This is the only place where such an article can be had'" (<sup>61</sup>). Hunter had been, moreover, in difficulty in other directions with the stores. If he had reduced the Commissariat fixed price for grain, as the sense of his

instructions required, the effect would have been to diminish the small share of store receipt currency which the officer-manipulated Commissariat still permitted the peasants, so accelerating their approach to bankruptcy <sup>(62)</sup>. He had tried to regulate the rum traffic, and the officers ignored him, asserting that their importations were for their own consumption. And even the undertaking of public agriculture, which he at last decided upon after receiving instructions to do so, was largely abortive, no more than 300 acres being in cultivation in 1800 <sup>(63)</sup>. By March, 1797, the Governor had restored enough convicts to public service to be able to release a hundred of them to bring into cultivation the deserted fields at Toongabbie, untouched since Phillip's departure. In 1799, seeking ground for Government, he had fenced a paltry 30 acres at Portland Place, below the junction of the Colo and Hawkesbury Rivers <sup>(64)</sup>. But each small extension of public farming increased the Governor's anxieties, because of his lack of competent managers. Hunter could not but have felt that he had failed to secure for the farmers freedom either to buy or to sell, and that he had not succeeded, either, in re-establishing public farming which might have been a backdoor means of breaking the officers' monopoly. And meantime, thousands of pounds were being made by these officers through the profitable means of trading, farming and stock-raising.

King's achievement in curbing the power of the monopolists was considerable. Under him an energetic revival of public farming was made. He instituted at the Commissary's stores a system of buying grain direct from the growers, established a Government retail store to sell supplies at reasonable prices in grain, and regulated rum imports with some small success <sup>(65)</sup>. But under Grose, Paterson and Hunter, the officers had entrenched themselves strongly in comparatively great landed possessions, and this fact King could not overcome—"that about one per cent. of landowners held about twenty per cent. of colonial land, and six per cent. of landowners (*i.e.*, thirty-five civil and military officers) owned not far short of half the total of land alienated" <sup>(66)</sup>. Says Fitzpatrick, continuing this argument, "A large interest had been vested in a very few persons, during nearly eight years; and the five or six hundred peasants whose small holdings King fenced round with protective devices could never be the forerunners of a colonial landed majority."

An understanding of the way in which the Governor tried to loosen the strangle-grip of the officers may be gained by noting the attempt made, in the July of King's first year of office, to re-assemble a public herd. The Governor purchased fifty-three head of cattle at £37 per head from Hunter, Foveaux and Captain Kent of H.M.S. "Buffalo" <sup>(67)</sup>. In after years Bigge noted that King, in 1804, had made very considerable grants of land to the inhabitants of different districts in the County of Cumberland, amounting altogether to 25,880 acres, "principally with a view of enabling the smaller settlers to keep cattle and provide manure for their small tenements; and especially those who were disposed to inhabit the towns or who had taken refuge in the high lands of Windsor and Richmond from the floods of the Hawkesbury" <sup>(68)</sup>. The names of the occupiers of the farms to whom he

intended to give a right of common, were entered on the backs of the grants. When Macquarie, more than fifteen years later, wished to obtain a resumption of these lands for the purpose of giving allotments to the great number of settlers who continued to arrive in 1820, he consulted Bigge. A meeting was called together at Windsor, attended by those who had the rights of common upon two of the largest, Richmond and Nelson Commons. The findings were that such a resumption would have entailed loss of pasture for the sheep and cattle of the settlers, "great numbers of which were grazing upon the Commons." The free lands were left undisturbed. It is at least clear from this that King's policy, as it had been intended, had been of some assistance to the small farmers. With public farming, moreover, an attempt was made to weaken the economic power of the monopolists. Whereas in 1800, Government farm land was only 300 to 400 acres compared to more than 7,000 acres in private lands, this had been increased to nearly 500 acres by the 1801 harvest <sup>(69)</sup>. At the same time, convicts were detached from private to public service, so that, in December, 1801, more than twenty-five per cent. of those at work were on the public farms, and in March, 1802, about the same percentage of an increased number of 1,212 convicts. By August, 1802, the public farms aggregated more than 1,100 acres in wheat and maize, compared with the settlers' 14,800 acres, and in 1803, King acquired for Government another farm at Castle Hill where 300 acres was sown with wheat. Later, King was able to state that by such means as these, he had saved nearly £1,500 on the produce of one rented farm at Cornwallis in a single year, and that, because of increase in the number of Government cattle, he had been able to reduce the Commissariat butcher's purchases <sup>(70)</sup>.

In 1801, things had been pretty desperate in the Colony, for of the 420 farmers, 17 per cent. were in gaol for debt or contemplating farms which were under execution for debt. Of the 5,500 inhabitants, half drew rations from the Commissary, although all could buy provisions, paying in grain from the new Government Store. By April, 1804 the position was clear enough as to who were the wealthy landlords and who the poor. Thirty-two officers held 10,000 acres; and in addition, Macarthur and Balmain owned nearly 5,000 acres. There were now 553 settlers on 25,000 acres. Three of them held from 350 to 1,028 acres each. Thus, combining together the two totals, it is seen that a small number of thirty-seven men, thirty-four of whom were officers, were at this stage holding 17,000 acres, and the remaining group of 550 settlers, 23,000 acres, or in averages per group, 404 and 42 acres respectively. More than half of the 550 majority worked farms—the term is scarcely applicable—of 30 acres or less, and nearly one-third, farms of from 30 to 100 acres in extent. Macarthur with 3,400 acres was the largest landowner, and four others had more than 1,000 acres each <sup>(71)</sup>.

The position of the peasants had been, all these facts notwithstanding, relieved to a considerable extent. Whereas, 70 per cent. of the population had been on rations in 1798, when the officers'



system was at its worst, about 50 per cent. were so situated in 1801, and only 37 per cent. in 1804, although more than 2,000 of them had arrived between the years 1801-3 inclusive <sup>(72)</sup>. This is the measure of Governor King's achievement. He had seen that the only strategy he could employ was to break down the officers' stranglehold on farming by reinforcing the peasantry through the emancipation of convicts in large numbers, and alienating to them what lands he thought they needed. There was in fact no alternative that he could have employed, having in view the strictly limited wage-labour market. It was essential that he should have emancipated as many as possible of the earlier arrived convicts to possible self-support on farms, if the exploitation of the Commissariat were not to be given over entirely to the officer-farmers <sup>(73)</sup>.



THE HAY MARKET IN SYDNEY (1850).

This old print shows in the right central position the imposing Hay Market of early Sydney. It stood in an open space between George, Elizabeth, Hay and Campbell Streets. The Peacock Inn on the left was at the corner of George and Campbell Streets, Sydney.

[Mitchell Library.]

### Farming Difficulties circa 1800-1810.

In the meantime, vicissitudes had tested the struggling agriculture. To some it appeared that "The inconveniences and embarrassments which fettered the growth of the Colony are now daily disappearing—agriculture begins to flourish, and industry is actually employed in many of those subdivisions which seldom prevail but in a long-settled country." But this was a superficial view only, true only by comparison with the times of Phillip <sup>(74)</sup>. There were a few good farms. Elizabeth Farm near Parramatta, owned by Macarthur, Brush Farm, about a mile west of the present Eastwood Railway Station, owned by William Cox, and the farm of Reverend Samuel Marsden, called Dundas Farm, were possibly the three best in the Colony at the time. Generally, however, farming conditions were extremely primitive.

Note may be taken of the new crops that were tried, the attempts to improve upon methods of cultivation, and the pests and trials that were met with. As Macquarie did, ten years later, King offered premiums "to the settlers' family who grows, manufactures and spins most flax within their own family for two years . . . and raises it from seed that will be given at that time to six candidates" (<sup>75</sup>). In October, 1801, the Governor was able to state that from a small quantity of European flax seed, a sufficiency had been grown to make 279 yards of fine and 337½ yards of coarse linen. Every woman who could spin had been employed since October, 1800. In August, 1804, nine looms were at work, turning out 100 yards of linen weekly, and it was expected that, if the cultivation and manufacture continued as satisfactorily, the inhabitants could be supplied with all the linen they might require. A total of 2,116 yards, worth £264 10s., had been sold to settlers in lieu of wheat. A similar success was not, however, achieved with "the vine" (<sup>76</sup>). In March, 1801, the Governor reported to the Home authorities that the two Frenchmen sent to cultivate "the vine" and make wine, not only for the Crown, but also for promoting viticulture on the part of individuals, had arrived. These two men were to be paid £100 per annum each, for a term of three years. At that time, there were, apparently, only about two acres of land under grapes. Some little attempts had previously been made to produce wine by one or two persons, but the experiments had not been successful. The Frenchmen were sent by King to Parramatta, where it was decided to commence a vineyard on Government account. Very soon, 7,000 cuttings had been planted out, the Governor, in October, 1801, reporting that "we have now got about 12,000 vines in the first and second year's growth." These optimistic hopes were, however, shattered. On 1st March, 1804, King was forced to the conclusion that the experiments had been a failure: "After a trial of three years, I do not find that the success attending the culture and management of the grapes will, in any degree, compensate for the expense attending that object, as this is the third year they have generally been blighted, which has prevented me from employing more men in extending that cultivation. The two Frenchmen . . . who came out in 1800 to manage this object, knew very little of the business. They attempted last year to make wine from some of the best grapes that could be collected, but it has turned out so bad that I shall not trouble your Lordship with the sample I intended sending." The two Frenchmen, supposed "experts" in their calling, proved on test quite as hopeless as had the earlier men who "had known something of farming" (<sup>77</sup>).

A landmark of the times is the notice issued by King on 7th May, 1803, to the effect that "as an encouragement to settlers, industrious and of good conduct," oxen would be issued to any approved settlers who had ploughs or could obtain them, in such proportion as the merits and exertions of the settlers required (<sup>78</sup>). In respect of any stock thus issued, repayment was to be made in grain. Cox later told Bigge that the offering had scarcely been taken up by any of the settlers, owing to the then prevailing idea that ploughs could not be used on cultivation land still retaining stumps two to three feet high, and also, because of the

paucity of cattle (<sup>79</sup>). The wild cattle were increasing at the Cow Pastures, but were of miserable type and "ferocious." The stock position was, in fact, difficult. A peculiar disease (almost certainly Foot and Mouth disease, one of the most serious of all animal plagues) had made its appearance amongst the cattle: "A spongy substance on the tongue, which, on being removed, occasions bad feet" (<sup>80</sup>). Furthermore, the sheep were subject "to foot rot and water on the head." There is an interesting description, extant, by George Cayley, who had been engaged as botanist and collector, and whose services were being paid for by Sir Joseph Banks, concerning the meat occasionally made available: "I have known worn-out bullocks killed that were very poor and issued, and salt provisions frequently of an inferior quality. I wish to God you had seen it by way of specimen, for I cannot describe by the pen. Had it been exposed for sale in an English market it would have been publicly burnt, for I have known that which would have been considered prime food here so treated" (<sup>81</sup>).

Another view of the general agricultural picture is given by Cayley (<sup>82</sup>): "On viewing the Colony from its commencement to the present time," he wrote, "I find its progress has not been rapid. I think I may venture to assert that it produced more supplies for its inhabitants some years ago than it does now, in proportion to the number at that time and at present . . . Clearing of land gets on very slowly . . . The methods of farming are conducted upon a bad principle, and (are) carried out in a slovenly manner. Nothing is further done than to break up the land with a hoe and throw in the wheat, which again is chopped over with a hoe or harrowed . . . The plough has been tried by some, but it does not seem to be preferred before the hoe. The stumps that yet remain in the ground are against it and also the high price of cattle; but what appears to me to prevent its coming into frequent use is the want of workmen that know how to use it . . . I have never seen any people weed their wheat, though it is generally over-run with weeds . . . The wheat is reaped in a slovenly manner, and a deal left scattered on the ground. After it is bound up into sheaves, it is carried by men on their backs to the barn or stack. This is obliged to be done by those who have not horses or oxen, which is chiefly the case throughout the Colony. When wheat is threshed it is badly cleaned and generally infested with oats and lolium, particularly the latter, which is here called drake. In an English market it would fetch but an indifferent price . . . In the cultivation of Indian corn they succeed better, not owing to the management, but to the nature of its growth; but it is frequently too green, and not well dried, which soon causes it to mould and rot. Barley I know but little about, for I have not seen much cultivated, but what there is is chiefly confined to the Hawkesbury. Oats I do not know that they have yet cultivated, even upon trial. They are generally a pest in wheat crops . . . Hay is an article I have not seen attempted at, and yet, in the winter, the cattle are half-starved. But one would imagine that the increase of cattle would cause it to be sought after . . . Gardening, that useful branch so subservient to mankind, is in an infant state.

It is rather remarkable that, as the food is mostly salt, it has not been more attended to. It is not uncommon to see people in a reputable situation to be without vegetables for some months of the year . . . Potatoes were very bad and stinking, on my first coming here, but of late are much improved, and no doubt but if the seed was exchanged often, and by proper attention, they will still improve . . . Onions do not bear good seed, and this is obliged to be got from Norfolk Island. These are the chief vegetables in use. As for varieties, they are but in few gardens." Cayley concludes by drawing a picture of the few houses in the colony: "Houses in general are nothing more than simple wretched huts, particularly of the farmers. The walls are wattled and plastered with clay, the roof thatched. But of late the building of houses has much improved. The out-houses, barns, etc., of the farmers are miserable-looking sheds, if we except a few that have been built by people who had money to lay out." His views on the Colony were then that "The description of men that are most wanted are a few good millwrights, colliers and farmers who are well acquainted with breeding cattle."

Meantime, floods had caused damage on the Hawkesbury, in the beginnings of a constant succession of such troubles. In a long report, in 1801, King's views were that "but for these destructive inundations that so frequently happen, those settlements alone would ensure a supply of grain for the whole Colony; but this calamity happening so frequently is a great discouragement to those who have so often been washed from their farms, and lost their all" <sup>(83)</sup>. This report of his had followed a flood on the Hawkesbury and Nepean in 1801. In fact, however, it had done comparatively little damage and affected the Colony but slightly, since at that time the number of settlers on the banks of the rivers was comparatively small <sup>(84)</sup>. In the years between 1801 and 1806, a considerable increase of settlement did occur on the rivers, and there was an interval of nearly five years without a flood occurring. Cox, in the Bigge Report Transcripts of Evidence, mentions this increase in settlement on the Hawkesbury. He stated to the Commissioner that King "continued giving land away but in large proportions and it generally took in high land out of reach of the floods . . . He granted the whole of the lands on the north side of the Hawkesbury from Richmond to the estate now occupied by Sir John Jamison called Regentsville." Seasons were good in these years but prices were low, Cox selling wheat, in 1804, for as low as 3s. 6d. a bushel. This was the general position when in March, 1806, the great flood of that year caused immense damage on the river. The flood swept away produce of every kind and "left the settlers in many instances to poverty and starvation" <sup>(85)</sup>. There was a considerable loss of life, and spoilage of the growing crops and stacks of the preceding harvest. The energies of the Colony were for a time almost paralysed and a state of emergency created. Prices for grain soon afterwards rose to fantastic prices and poverty, ruin and famine were widespread. Maize meal and flour of the coarsest kind were sold in Sydney at 2s. 6d per lb., and a 2 lb. loaf of bread sold at 4s. 6d. and even 5s. Whole families on the Hawkesbury had no bread in their houses for months on end. Things were

extremely critical when, on the 13th August following, King was succeeded by Bligh. The practical side of the character of this last of the naval governors is evident in Lang's description of his handling of the desperate position. Bligh, apparently, did everything he could to relieve the situation <sup>(86)</sup>. He made a personal tour of the devastated districts, and inquired into the circumstances of each of the settlers individually. He caused a number of the Government cattle which by then had increased into a considerable herd, to be slaughtered and the meat distributed amongst the needy peasants. And, finally, in order to encourage them to cultivate as large an extent of land as possible for the ensuing harvest, he undertook to purchase for the Commissariat all the wheat they might have to dispose of at 10s. per bushel, in place of the ruinously low prices afforded in some of the previous years. The consequence of this "judicious and beneficent measure were speedily apparent." The dispirited settlers were stimulated to increased exertions; a large extent of cleared land which had been enriched by successive floods was put under cultivation, and the next (1806-1807) harvest was abundant. "Plenty and contentment were at length happily restored." Bligh was, in fact, congratulated by the Home authorities on the measures taken, a letter to him, written 31st December, 1807, stating: "I am to express Lord Castlereagh's approbation of the measures taken by you to relieve the Colony from the late calamities, occasioned by the imprudence of the settlers in not taking precautions against possible inundations" <sup>(87)</sup>.

Lang gives, also, an interesting account of the circumstances which, in his view, led to the smash between Bligh and the monopolist vested interests of the Corps, and since it relates directly to the agricultural situation of the times, it should not be ignored <sup>(88)</sup>. It appears that Bligh had observed, on his tour of inspection of the Hawkesbury district, that the small farmer-settlers, independently of their liability to floods, were extremely depressed "in consequence of the miserable system of traffic then prevalent in the Colony." There was no doubt that "to such persons as emancipated convict settlers, who were just beginning to acquire the habits of virtuous industry in agriculture, no state of affairs could possibly (have been) more injurious than (for them) to be exposed to the almost irresistible temptation to barter away their hardly earned produce for rum." Besides, it had not escaped Bligh's observation that "the industrious free emigrant settlers of the humbler class were also universally kept down through the operation of the same system though in a somewhat different way; for in disposing of their agricultural produce to the merchants, or rather dealers, in Sydney, they could only obtain payment in property as it was called, *i.e.*, in rum, tea, sugar, or such other goods as the dealer had to dispose of, at an enormous percentage profit above their real value." Bligh, therefore, attempted to correct these things. He made a second tour of inspection of the agricultural districts of the Colony, inquiring successively into the circumstances and resources of each of the settlers, and taking a list of the articles of household consumption which each informed the Governor he stood in need of, as well as of the quantities of beef, pork, wheat or maize which he thought he was

likely to be able to sell to the stores, in the course of the ensuing season. According to the idea the Governor thus formed of each settler's wants and abilities, he gave him an order, forthwith on the Commissariat, for the articles which he judged it necessary to him to receive, the price of which he was to pay in produce at a certain fixed rate at the ensuing harvest. "This arrangement," continues Lang, "was unquestionably the most judicious, the most philanthropic, and the most directly conducive to the rapid advancement of a Colony, composed of such heterogeneous materials as the Colony of New South Wales, which it was possible for any Governor to have adopted at the period in question." This for the reason that "as the King's store at that time contained almost every article that was required in a family, and as the Governor set a very moderate price on those articles that were thus to be exchanged for produce with the settlers, it was in the direct interest of the latter to make immediate payment whenever they were able to do so . . . as in the event they were not likely to obtain a second supply from the stores, and as everything they required to purchase was sure to cost them four times the price anywhere else." It was then no wonder that in after years the memory of Bligh was cherished by the small settlers: "Them were the days for the poor settler; he had only to tell the Governor what he wanted and he was sure to get it from the stores; whatever it was, sir, from a needle to an anchor, from a penn'orth o' pack thread to a ship's cable."

There is no question that this policy of the Governor was in direct opposition to the interests of the "comparatively numerous and powerful class of individuals who had grown corpulent in the drunkenness of the Colony and who lived and moved and had their being as men of credit and renown." The effects were that "certain parties of good repute could no longer sell the usual quantity of Bengal rum, Brazil tobacco, Siam sugar, Young Hyson tea and British manufactured goods at the usual remunerating prices." The direct consequence was an open breach between the Governor and the Corps officers, eventually resulting in Bligh's deposition.

### **Conclusions.**

The summary here given of developments between the years 1792-1809 explains some of the trials which affected the infant agriculture of New South Wales. It is needless to emphasize the influence of the trader-monopolists. That has been done elsewhere. As apart from the depressing effect which exorbitant prices for every article of consumption did have on the position of the small ex-convict farmers, factors such as droughts and floods caused trouble as well. Moreover, even as early as 1809, some of the later problems encountered were making their presence felt. This is illustrated very well in a report sent to the Home Authorities by Bligh, on 31st October, 1809: "The actual cultivators of the ground in all the old farms perhaps may just now fill smaller returns than the new settlers, owing to their having so much longer tilled the parts of the estates they hold without any intermission. Where the soil remains good, as on the banks of the Hawkesbury, or places similarly situated on the sides of

the creeks, this may not be felt; but on the hills in the neighbourhood of Sydney and Parramatta, where the soil is not deep, it must be expected to fail, and other parts of the land must be cleared. . . . Experimental farming cannot be pursued in an infant colony unless we consider it adopted here by the ignorance of those who possess grounds, and never knew the practical part of agriculture. Most of our settlers have been of this description. The advancement, therefore, we are to expect is by such general good rules to lead them to industry as are simple and efficacious. . . . In order to obtain these ends, the improvement of the impoverished or worn-out estates must be attended to. Certain portions should only be cultivated at proper intervals of time, in order that the strength may be recruited either by natural or artificial means. No more grain should be sown than the farmer can keep clear and secure. His family wants in the year should be provided. His excess should be capable of being turned into good payments to procure other necessaries, and the independence which every good man looks forward to, and blessed hope tells him to expect. . . . To these objects the honest settler now seems to attend. He is sensible that ten acres of grain, cleanly and judiciously sown and reaped, will return him more than fifteen in the usual slovenly manner that it has been done, besides relieving him from the extra labour which conduced to make him poor; and by this means also his garden will be timely crott, and the potatoes, pulse and vegetables, reward him for the time he can allot to this purpose. On the part of Government every assistance is given that it sees will accomplish these desirable ends. . . . Cattle and stock allotted to all who can purchase them at two-thirds and half the price they can be bought for from private individuals. This will enable them not only to plough but to manure and fence in their ground, which I have earnestly recommended and will become a general system in due time" (\*).

It would appear from this report by Bligh, and if we can believe Lang, from the other measures adopted by the Governor in directly assisting the settlers after the 1806 flood, that he, rather than Macquarie and later governors, did appreciate to some degree the correct attitude required to bolster and maintain emancipist agriculture. This meant a paternal administration, and help above the ordinary—a guaranteed market for produce, control over prices, selling of necessaries by government at competitive and cheapest possible prices, and a recognition of the reasons why worked-out lands were declining in production. It is possible, this being the case, that if there had not been present in the Colony such a conflict between free enterprise and exploitation of capital, on the one hand, and government protection of ex-convict rehabilitation on the other, he might have done much to safely establish the small farmers on the land. As it was, however, his hands were tied, as had been those of the preceding administrations. Wealth, capital and power were already established as vested interests. When Macquarie arrived, he, too, was working not with a situation which he could alter at will or rebuild from the ground up, but with a state of mind, customs and practices already established, a delineation of the settlers between

haves and have-nots, a free trade and a free economy controlled by the simple laws of supply and demand, a vexatious conflict between opposing interests, with which he could attempt to deal, but over which he did not have the final control. Bligh, it would seem, did foresee the lines upon which further small-scale settlement could continue, provided some protection was afforded. This, Macquarie either could not or did not follow. The possibilities are that the wars which continued during the first half of his administration and which made adequate importation of necessities in quantity, and thus a lowering of prices impracticable, did leave room for traders and the high cost of the articles sold by them, to further depress an already impoverished small farming class. Monopoly continued though in different hands. The settlers were placed on the land, but after that, left independent to compete on an open public and an irregular Commissariat market for the produce cultivated on their farms, and in a free economy, within which they might either fail or succeed. Inevitably, the experiment was a travesty, the settlers emerging from the Macquarie period in 1821 in much the same condition as they entered in 1810, the majority desperately poor, with their agriculture a failure, a considerable proportion dispossessed, some renting and continuing to work farms which they had once owned.

In the long run, the first thirty-odd years of primary development are possibly immaterial, if regard be had to the later accelerated development which took place in hands other than those of the pioneer farmers, and if the sacrifice of wasted efforts, blasted hopes and miseries be ignored. The country was to be peopled, not by convicts, but by free men, and the emancipists were, accordingly, submerged in the stream, few but those with interests outside of agriculture acquiring wealth.

Lang, with good reason, calls the years, 1792 following, during which the New South Wales Corps had undisputed economic control in the Colony, a "period of ten thousand sorrows" for those outside the monopoly ring<sup>(60)</sup>. There can be no argument with his conclusion that "the formation of the Corps was both in a moral and political sense the most ill-advised and unfortunate measure that the British Government could have adopted." The plain facts are that the Colony was exploited in the interregnum between Phillip and Macquarie. Certain of the officers acquired fortunes. The condition of the Colony otherwise may perhaps be best described in the words of Macquarie when, in after years, he came to assess the achievement of his administration. "I found the Colony," he reported to Lord Bathurst in his final apologia of 27th July, 1822, "barely emerging from infantile imbecility, and suffering from various privations and disabilities; the country impenetrable beyond forty miles from Sydney; agriculture in a yet languishing state; commerce in its early dawn; revenue unknown; threatened with famine; distracted by faction; the public buildings in a state of dilapidation and mouldering to decay; the few roads and bridges formerly constructed rendered almost impassable; the population in general depressed by poverty; no public credit nor private confidence . . ." (61).



**References.**

- (<sup>1</sup>) An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales, J. D. Lang, 47-52.
- (<sup>2</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>3</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>4</sup>) Fitzpatrick—British Imperialism and Australia, p. 94.
- (<sup>5</sup>) Greenwood—Early American-Australian Relations to 1830, p. 116.
- (<sup>6</sup>) H.R.A. I, 1, p. 413 cit. Greenwood supra.
- (<sup>7</sup>) Fitzpatrick op. cit. p. 95.
- (<sup>8</sup>) H.R.A. I, 1, pp. 441-2.
- (<sup>9</sup>) Collins—An Account of the English Colony of New South Wales, p. 376.
- (<sup>10</sup>) Ibid p. 377.
- (<sup>11</sup>) Cf. Greenwood op. cit. pp. 117 et seq.
- (<sup>12</sup>) Collins op. cit. p. 443.
- (<sup>13</sup>) Lang op. cit. p. 70.
- (<sup>14</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>15</sup>) Minutes of Evidence 1812 Transportation Committee c.f. Fitzpatrick pp. 102 et seq. Lang op. cit. p. 71 et seq.
- (<sup>16</sup>) Lang op. cit. p. 68.
- (<sup>17</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>18</sup>) Fitzpatrick op. cit. p. 102.
- (<sup>19</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>20</sup>) Cit. Fitzpatrick p. 103.
- (<sup>21</sup>) H.R.A. I, 11, p. 141 et seq.
- (<sup>22</sup>) H.R.A. I, 1, pp. 202, 212-213, 216, 216-217, c.f. Fitzpatrick p. 103.
- (<sup>23</sup>) H.R.A. I, 11, p. 505.
- (<sup>24</sup>) Fitzpatrick op. cit. pp. 112-113.
- (<sup>25</sup>) Ibid p. 116.
- (<sup>26</sup>) Ibid pp. 117-118.
- (<sup>27</sup>) Ibid pp. 118-119.
- (<sup>28</sup>) Ibid p. 118.
- (<sup>29</sup>) Greenwood op. cit. p. 123 c.f. Fitzpatrick op. cit. p. 119.
- (<sup>30</sup>) H.R.A. I, 111, p. 68, cit. Greenwood op. cit. p. 127.
- (<sup>31</sup>) Cf. Greenwood pp. 127 et seq. for full particulars of this illicit trade.
- (<sup>32</sup>) Fitzpatrick op. cit. p. 122.
- (<sup>33</sup>) H.R.A. I, vi, pp. 568 et seq. 572-3, 578-9, 583.
- (<sup>34</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>35</sup>) H.R.A. I, 1, pp. 383 et seq. 307, 324, 339, 373, 391.
- (<sup>36</sup>) Collins op. cit. p. 80.
- (<sup>37</sup>) Campbell—From Colony to Commonwealth, cit. p. 12, N.S.W. Agricultural Gazette, January, 1901, Vol. XII, Part 1.
- (<sup>38</sup>) Ibid cit. p. 15.
- (<sup>39</sup>) H.R.A. I, 1, pp. 89 et seq.
- (<sup>40</sup>) S.M. Onslow, Early Records of the Macarthurs of Camden, pp. 349 et seq; Macarthur to Bigge, 7th February, 1821.
- (<sup>41</sup>) Cf. Fitzpatrick op. cit. pp. 95 et seq.
- (<sup>42</sup>) H.R.A. I, 1, pp. 435 et seq.
- (<sup>43</sup>) Cf. Fitzpatrick op. cit. p. 97.
- (<sup>44</sup>) Campbell op. cit. pp. 15 et. seq.
- (<sup>45</sup>) Fitzpatrick op. cit. p. 97.
- (<sup>46</sup>) Collins op. cit. p. 208.
- (<sup>47</sup>) Campbell op. cit. p. 14.
- (<sup>48</sup>) Ibid.
- (<sup>48A</sup>) Ibid.

**References—continued.**

- (<sup>49</sup>) Ibid. p. 15.  
(<sup>49A</sup>) Fitzpatrick op. cit. p. 99.  
(<sup>50</sup>) Shann—Economic History of Australia, p. 29, Fitzpatrick op. cit. pp. 99-100.  
(<sup>51</sup>) Fitzpatrick op. cit. p. 100-101—Collins op. cit. pp. 376, 377, 343.  
(<sup>52</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>53</sup>) Campbell op. cit. p. 18.  
(<sup>54</sup>) Ibid p. 19.  
(<sup>55</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>56</sup>) Early Records of the Macarthurs of Camden, Letter of 1st September, 1795, by Mrs. Macarthur, pp. 50-51.  
(<sup>57</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>58</sup>) Campbell op. cit. p. 20.  
(<sup>59</sup>) Ibid p. 27.  
(<sup>60</sup>) H.R.A. I, II, pp. 434 et seq. Hunter to Portland, 5th January, 1800.  
(<sup>61</sup>) H.R.A. I, II, pp. 434 et seq. Hunter to Portland, 2nd March, 1798.  
(<sup>62</sup>) Fitzpatrick op. cit. pp. 110-111.  
(<sup>63</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>64</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>65</sup>) Ibid p. 112.  
(<sup>66</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>67</sup>) H.R.A. I, II, pp. 512-520.  
(<sup>68</sup>) Bigge—Agriculture and Trade, p. 38.  
(<sup>69</sup>) Fitzpatrick op. cit. p. 114.  
(<sup>70</sup>) Ibid and H.R.A. I, II, p. 527 and I, III, p. 340.  
(<sup>71</sup>) Ibid pp. 118-119 H.R.A. I, II, pp. 454 et seq.; I, IV, pp. 489, 314-315; I, III, pp. 613-614.  
(<sup>72</sup>) Ibid pp. 120-121 and H.R.A. I, II, pp. 222-223; I, III, p. 4 et seq.; I, IV, p. 628.  
(<sup>73</sup>) Ibid, p. 122.  
(<sup>74</sup>) Campbell op. cit. p. 30.  
(<sup>75</sup>) Ibid, pp. 45-46.  
(<sup>76</sup>) Ibid, pp. 46-47.  
(<sup>77</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>78</sup>) Ibid p. 50.  
(<sup>79</sup>) Bigge; Transcripts of Evidence—Examination of William Cox.  
(<sup>80</sup>) Campbell op. cit. quoted p. 53.  
(<sup>81</sup>) Ibid quoted p. 50.  
(<sup>82</sup>) Ibid quoted pp. 51 et seq.  
(<sup>83</sup>) Ibid quoted p. 48.  
(<sup>84</sup>) Lang: An Historical and Statistical Account of N.S.W. (1875 Ed.) pp. 84-85.  
(<sup>85</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>86</sup>) Ibid pp. 96-98.  
(<sup>87</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>88</sup>) Ibid.  
(<sup>89</sup>) Campbell op. cit. quoted pp. 60-61.  
(<sup>90</sup>) Lang op. cit. pp. 47-48.  
(<sup>91</sup>) H.R.A. I, x, pp. 671 et seq.