

# The Aboriginal History Project

## Newspaper Archive

Herald 3rd February 1937

### DARWIN ABORIGINAL DOMESTICS GO ON STRIKE FOR MORE PAY

DARWIN, Monday. — More than 100 aborigines employed as domestics and general helps in Darwin homes and by Government departments went on strike this morning and decided to remain out until their demands have been met.

The aborigines are demanding more pay, and are asking that the superintendent of the Berrimah Aboriginal Reserve (Mr J. Gribble), who resigned at the week-end, be returned.

The strikers, who include a number of lubras and some police-trackers wearing their official hat-badges, held a stop-work meeting near Parap police station.

After they had been addressed by the Acting Director of Native Affairs (Mr V. White), the aborigines decided to adjourn to Berrimah compound.

More than 100 natives, excepting a few who climbed on to trucks, immediately began to walk six miles along the main road back to Berrimah.

They looked a motley crowd as they ambled back home to continue the meeting, straggling out

over about 300 yards of the road-way and followed by several dogs and a number of small children.

Language difficulties are causing trouble in getting the matter straightened out because few full-blood aborigines speak what might be called good English.

They are able to explain, however, that they are dissatisfied with the Government practice of paying them as a general rule only 10/ weekly of their 30/ salary and placing the balance to their credit in a trust account on which they are allowed to draw only a small sum at a time.

Domestics employed in private homes seldom get more than 10/ a week, and it is believed that some lubras are paid as little as 5/.

Many employers, however, give clothes, a midday meal, and other food and tobacco. Where natives

live on the premises, all meals and clothing are provided.

Mr Gribble resigned at the week-end to take a job with Qantas Empire Airways. He was once a missionary at Forrest River, WA, and says he has been associated with natives for 30 years.

One native at the strike meeting said, "Mister Gribble told us to see Mister White for more money today and he also told us to ask him to get him back at the compound."

Asked who were the leaders of the strike meeting, the native said, "There is no leader. This is all about blackfellow talk," by which he meant that the natives had mutually agreed to talk it over and not go to work.