

5. The politics of Kanaka labour

George Allen, a prominent Sydney solicitor, nominated member of the Legislative Council, and a pillar of the Pitt Street Congregational Church, wrote in his journal on 28 April 1847 that the prevailing dissatisfaction with ‘the Cannibals brought by Mr B. Boyd from the Islands in the Southern Ocean as Labourers to this Colony . . . [and] it is very questionable whether these people may not prove an awful evil to this country’.¹ The day before, Allen had attended the annual meeting of the New South Wales Auxiliary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. Dr Robert Ross, minister of the Congregational Church in Pitt Street, after reading the church’s annual report, drew his congregation’s attention to the arrival of 60 Pacific Islanders at Boyd Town. He explained that natives from Tana in the New Hebrides had been imported to work as shepherds in squatting districts. They were cannibals of the worst kind, driven not by hunger, but taste and habit, and ‘savages of the most ferocious kind sunk in the lowest stages of barbarism—of the same class as those who most cruelly murdered our missionary Williams—moving about in their own islands in a state of absolute nudity—and polluted with all the vices of the grossest heathenism’. Missionaries could not live among them but they were being brought to the colony to care for flocks and become part of the population. The Reverend William Howe, recently returned from Tahiti, told the meeting that those who had introduced these men had done wrong in not procuring labourers from Christianised islands.²

The *Australian*—in which Boyd was rumoured to have an interest—responded that the Kanakas, with kind and just treatment, would answer Boyd’s end in bringing them to the colony. There could be no objection to them as long as they were free to stay or go but, if they brought no women, they would not produce the next generation shepherds and stockmen in the interior. A week later, the *Australian* attacked ‘the debarkation of

¹ Entry 28 April 1847, Allen, Journal 1844-75, MSS 477, item 4, ML

² Meeting, *SMH*, 28 April 1847.

merciless hordes of man-eating savages'. Nothing could justify degrading a British colony, imperilling its moral, social, and religious supremacy, by swamping it with barbarians 'unconscious of moral or mental restraint—ignorant of any law human or divine'. These 'children of the night' would 'overshadow the land with sin and gloom'.³

The conservative *Sydney Morning Herald*, with the largest circulation in the colony, observed that the mere fact that graziers were having recourse to such an expedient should convince the imperial government of the need to revive British emigration. The colonists would never think of importing savages and heathens if labour could be supplied by their own countrymen. Peopling sheepwalks with 'strange races' was repugnant to their national predilections: 'Much rather would they see Australia replenished and subdued by the unmixed, undeteriorated progeny of their own Anglo-Saxon fathers'. Whether the monotony of shepherding would be congenial to New Hebrideans, known for their lassitude and indolence, remained to be proved. The *Herald* also expressed misgivings about the attitude of 'the vulgar herd of our own race' with whom the Kanakas would come into contact. Given ignorance and simplicity of the Kanakas, practical jokes and liberties 'will be resented in a more summary way than civilized society approves'. Still, if adequate labour could not be obtained from the United Kingdom, Pacific Islanders should be encouraged as 'a *dernier* resort'. If they could adapt to the solitude of shepherding and live peaceably with their English neighbours, they might ward off the evils of labour shortages and exorbitant wages. Thousands of men could imported from 'the vast insular regions' of the Pacific for £5 a head but, unless women came with them, New South Wales would become tainted by a dangerous 'admixture of races'.⁴

³ *Australian*, 24 April, 4 May 1847.

⁴ *SMH*, 23 April 1847.

Boyd and fellow members of the Pastoral Association founded the weekly *Atlas* in 1844 to oppose new squatting regulations and to raise revenue for assisted emigration from the United Kingdom. Robert Lowe, a barrister who had come to the colony in 1842 for his health, was the editor and main contributor to the *Atlas* until 1848. The *Atlas* castigated the *Sydney Morning Herald* for supporting the introduction of *anthropophagi*, 'a horde of savage cannibals' not be regarded 'otherwise than with loathing and abhorrence'. Colonists opposed to convicts would have to be content 'to see our pastures filled, not with European Christians, but with cannibals, fresh from their last disgusting banquet'.

Two weeks later, the *Atlas* published a letter accusing the *Sydney Morning Herald* of hypocrisy, inconsistency and ignorance. The argument that convicts would not render obedience to the laws, morality and religion essential to the welfare of society applied even more so to savages lacking the intellect and enlightenment to understand the principles and laws on which civilisation is based. The interior of the colony, with a scattered and thin population largely beyond the reach of the law, could offer no moral and religious instruction to the Kanakas. Preventing the risk of reviving the inhuman system of slavery that had long disgraced the civilised world might be difficult.⁵

The short-lived *Sentinel*, founded in January 1845 to defend Protestantism against Puseyism and papism, questioned the nature of the religious instruction that, according to Captain Kirsopp, was to be offered to the Kanakas. 'By whom, and in what language, is it to be communicated?' an editorial asked. Missionaries spent years acquiring a knowledge of the habits, language and superstitions of savages in order to teach them, a task that required 'a degree of patience and fortitude, a humility, a confidence in God, which is the privilege of very, very few to obtain'. Colonists had no right to assume control over the Kanakas amounting to guardianship without securing the moral and religious instruction that would qualify them for the enjoyment of the privileges enjoyed by the

⁵ *Atlas*, 24 April 1847. 'A. D. M.', *Atlas*, 8 May 1847. Walker, *Newspaper Press in New South Wales*, 37-9. Knight, *Illiberal Liberal*, 110-115.

subjects of a Christian power. They must be either British subjects or slaves.⁶

The *Australasian Chronicle* had been founded in 1839 to defend Roman Catholics against sectarian attacks and to campaign for greater equality, civil rights and political representation. Edward Hawksley, a politically radical Catholic, bought an interest in the renamed the *Sydney Chronicle* and edited the paper. Most of its readers were Catholics and poor emigrants from Ireland.⁷ Polynesian immigration had excited public interest, the *Chronicle* observed. If natives of the New Hebrides, ‘sunk in the lowest depths of heathenism’, possessed anything resembling a code of morality, it was different to that understood by British colonists. So ignorant were they of our laws and customs that, if anything aroused their ‘latent barbarism’, inflicting severe punishment on them would be an injustice. Employers were unlikely to teach them ‘the divine truths of Christianity’ and bring them ‘within the pale of civilisation’. Males only were being imported. Pacific Islanders, who had been Christianized had discarded their barbarous habits and become acquainted with our religion and customs, could be obtained. Even so, all South Sea Islanders were our brethren and should be esteemed as such. If 500 men and women were introduced, a good Christian could be paid £50 a year to teach them Christianity. On returning home they would take their new religion, together with civilised manners and customs, and convert their people.⁸

The *Heads of the People* declared that the colonists were indebted to Boyd for importing labour from the Pacific Islands when other employers were proposing and debating impossible schemes to solve their labour problems. Settlers were boiling down flocks and herds for want of labour while Pacific Islanders were suffering for want of food. Christians ought to consider seriously the miserable conditions in which they lived and

⁶ *Sentinel*, 29 April 1847.

⁷ AC, 29 November 1839. O’Farrell, *Catholic Church and Community in Australia*, 66-70.

⁸ SC, 28 April 1847.

the horrible straits to which they were reduced. The colony needed labour and these 'poor creatures' wanted food: 'it seems a dispensation of Divine Providence that the labour required by this vast continent should be taken from the over-peopled islands with which the sea that washes or shore is studded'. Following the philanthropic design of Mr Boyd by allowing these people to emigrate would be the surest means of Christianising them and for ever abolishing the dreadful crimes of cannibalism and infanticide from their islands.⁹

The *Argus* at Port Phillip reprinted the *Sydney Morning Herald's* editorial titled 'Immigration from Polynesia'.¹⁰ The *Port Phillip Gazette* suggested that New Zealanders would make excellent shepherds. Travellers described them as willing to work and imbued with habits of business and industry but transporting these men from their own country to New South Wales might be seen as kidnapping. New Zealanders would not 'amalgamate kindly' with Anglo-Saxons and Aborigines. White servants see them as interlopers. Importing heathens was 'inconsistent' when thousands of Christians in Ireland and Scotland were starving. Ministers and teachers appointed to counteract the evil influences to which these unsophisticated men would be exposed in the bush would be hard to find. Separating such men from family ties by sending them to the bush as solitary shepherds would be cruel.¹¹

The *Port Phillip Herald* reported that Boyd had imported savages from the coral islands for his Murray River stations, 'de-brutalizing them, making them "good and faithful subjects", and finally indoctrinating them as denizens, and a material portion of the future generation of our adopted country'. The colony needed labour but not 'thorough or half-caste felons' or 'self-devouring savages'. Securing the services of cannibals as

⁹ *Heads of the People*, 1 May 1847.

¹⁰ *Argus*, 4 May 1847.

¹¹ *PPG*, 1 May 1847.

shepherds and stockmen for the cost of their rations disregarded other considerations for the present state and future of society and the deteriorating influences arising from an admixture of races. New Hebrideans were not cannibals from hunger but their 'blood thirstiness'. Importing convicts or cannibals would prevent a renewal of British emigration, the colony's only hope for the coming years.¹²

A letter published early in June questioned the expediency of introducing cannibals when British emigrants were being assured that the Port Phillip District was free of some of the grosser vices of the colony to the north. The introduction of males only would not improve the proportion of the sexes. A large addition to the police would be needed in remote districts to prevent disturbances between the natives and imported blacks.¹³

The *Port Phillip Herald* published a report from a correspondent in Sydney early in May that John Ross, who had charge of 62 Kanakas travelling to Boyd's runs on the Murrumbidgee, was the son of Dr Robert Ross. Despite his protest at a missionary meeting against the importation of 'cannibals', the report claimed that 'in private the bugbear of cannibalism is treated by him with that ridicule which it deserves'. Dr Ross responded that he did not know that his son was taking Kanakas to the Boyd's runs along the Murrumbidgee River and denied ever treating cannibalism with ridicule in public or private. He asked the *Sydney Morning Herald* to publish his denial of this 'utterly false' and 'vile insinuation' so that his character would not be injured among those who did not know him personally. The *Port Phillip Herald* conceded that their correspondent had been misled on this matter, assuring readers they supported Dr Ross 'in condemning the wholesale introduction of these cannibals'.¹⁴

¹² *PPH*, 6 May 1847 (supp).

¹³ 'L', *PPH*, 3 June 1847.

¹⁴ *PPH*, 20 May, 10 June 1847. Ross, *SMH*, 4 June 1847.

Charles Cowper moved in the Legislative Council on 18 May 1847 for a committee to report the best means of obtaining an adequate labour supply. John Foster, a squatter representing the Port Phillip District, moved that committee inquire into the importation of Asiatic or South Sea Island labour, and whether employers should be taxed a £1 for every servant brought from these countries. Immigration from the South Seas, he explained, should be conducted at public expense under government regulation and supervision. Leaving immigration to 'the mercy and caprice of private individuals' might allow it to degenerate into little better than a slave trade. Richard Windeyer, a barrister and member of the Aborigines Protection Society, attacked the idea of taking 'the money of the white, the Christian, the civilized man, in order to bring amongst them hordes of black and savage cannibals'. Employers should pay both the expenses of importing them and for the police to keep them in order. If male cannibals were let loose on the decent people of the colony, he warned, 'savages who would not scruple to eat a girl' would not be 'over scrupulous in the gratification of any other appetite'.

Robinson defended the introduction of Pacific Islanders: 'Were they not all one common family whether Asiatic, European or African?' he asked. New Zealanders made up half the crews on Boyd's whaling ships. As Europeans were not required as shepherds, the work could be done more cheaply by Asiatics. He proposed that immigration bounties, equivalent to two-thirds of their passage costs, be paid on labourers from Europe, India and China. Wentworth argued that the land fund was not the patrimony of Great Britain but created by the enterprise of the colonists. If employers agreed to be taxed to introduce black or coloured labour, no other class had much to do with it. The committee might consider prohibiting the natives of the cannibal islands but allow the importation of 'Christianized heathens'. Indians and Chinese might be also obtained. The colonial secretary told the house that the government would not agree to bounties on Asiatic immigrants. The attorney general added that the government might have to appoint 'a protector to stand between these savages and their employer' to ensure they understood

their agreements, otherwise it would become a slave trade. Indians sent to Moreton Bay, who were not savages but civilised, had claimed that the terms the agreements under which they worked in the colony were different to those they had 'signed' at Calcutta. The house rejected Foster's motion by eighteen votes to seven.¹⁵

The attorney general, John Hubert Plunkett, had advised the police magistrate at Maitland in August 1846 that the colony's Master and Servant Act did not expressly authorise magistrates to punish servants who had entered agreements in Van Diemen's Land or other jurisdictions to work in New South Wales.¹⁶ A bill to correct technical deficiencies in the Master and Servant Act, introduced into the Legislative Council in June 1847, contained a clause legalising contracts entered into outside of New South Wales. In committee, the colonial secretary and attorney general secured an amendment, by ten votes to eight, to exclude agreements entered into 'in the British East India possessions and foreign countries'.

The attorney general had predicted in 1841 that Indian coolies would be slaves in the colony; describing them as indentured servants was a 'mere shuffle'.¹⁷ He now told the house that this would prevent a 'slave trade' in coolies and savages. Squatters did not regard 'cannibals' from the South Seas as a solution to their labour problems but they did not want to see the door shut on Indian or Chinese coolies. A month later, Wentworth moved that the clause be recommitted and the original wording to stand. Natives of India, China and 'the civilized races of the South Seas', he argued, should come under the Act provided two justices of the peace agreed they understood their contracts. The colonial secretary negotiated a compromise. The committee accepted, on the casting vote of the

¹⁵ Debate, NSW LC, *SMH*, 19 May 1847.

¹⁶ Attorney general to police magistrate, Maitland, 18 August 1846, 4/6659, SARNSW.

¹⁷ Attorney general LC, *Australian*, 23 July 1841.

chairman, the reinstatement of the original clause without change and introduced a new clause excluding 'any native of any savage or uncivilized tribe inhabiting any Island or Country in the Pacific Islands or elsewhere'.¹⁸

James Macarthur told the 1847 immigration committee that labour shortages were forcing employers 'to pass over acts of insubordination and misconduct' by servants, thus reversing 'the natural order of society' by allowing servants to become masters. The colony had no chance of raising a land fund to pay for emigration from the United Kingdom while the price of Crown land remained at the 'prohibitory' price of £1 an acre. When the chairman asked Macarthur whether the colony should resort to 'direct taxation' to fund assisted emigration, he replied that, if all else failed, this questionable expedient that might have to be adopted to keep the 'channels of immigration' open. 'I assume it to be a recognized and unalterable principle', he added, 'that no immigration shall take place to this Colony, at public expense, except from the United Kingdom or the Continent of Europe', Even so, there should be no restriction on private individuals importing labour by from India or elsewhere.

The committee reported in mid-September 1847 that the Legislative Council, year after year, had urged the imperial government on the necessity of assisted immigration. The land fund, which paid for emigration, had been annihilated 'in consequence of the determination to carry out the system of Mr. E. G. Wakefield'. Despairing flock masters had turned to proposals for bringing labour from India, China and the Pacific Islands. Indeed, a 'partial immigration' had already been established with the island of Tana. The government and people of England should consider whether sound national policy sanctioned that the boundless regions of Australia, capable of sustaining millions of our fellow subjects, being occupied by 'a semi-barbarous or even savage race'.¹⁹

¹⁸ [NSW] 11 Vic no 9, ss 3, 15. Debates, NSW LC, 1, 8, 15 June, 2, 13 July 1847, *SMH*, 2, 9, 16 June, 3, 14 July 1847; SC, 19 June, 14 July 1847.

¹⁹ Report, 1-2; Macarthur's evidence, 7 July 1847, qs 12-16, SC immigration 1847,

La Brillante, a French corvette, arrived in to Sydney on 12 September 1847 with news that the crew of the *Velocity* had committed an ‘outrage’ on the natives of Rotuma. The *Australian* and *Shipping Gazette* reported that *La Brillante* had encountered the *Velocity* anchored off Aneityum on 25 August. Crewmen on the *Velocity*’s told the French officers that a dispute with the natives on Rotuma had led to an exchange of shots, the killing one man and wounding others. The *Portenia* reached Sydney on 24 September with 64 male Kanakas and four females. The *Australian* warned that they would cause ‘a further desecration our soil from the same impure and pagan source’.²⁰

The arrival of the *Portenia* gave Robert Lowe a stick with which to beat Boyd and squatting interests. Lowe had opposed new squatting regulations in 1844 as an unconstitutional attempt to impose ‘an arbitrary tribute’ on the colonists. Three years later he blamed the imperial government for raising the land price to £1 an acre and allow squatters long leases. He charged Wentworth, leader of landed interests in the Legislative Council, ‘with grasping monopoly, with a grievous invasion of the rights of the people, with tyrannous oppression of the poor colonists’. Squatters had seized the land but could not use it without labour. Like Midas, they would starve in the midst of gold.²¹

Lowe moved in the Legislative Council on 1 October 1847 for an address to be presented to the governor calling attention ‘to the incipient Slave Trade which is so rapidly springing up between this Colony and the Islands of the Pacific Ocean’.²² He told members that Boyd’s Pacific Islanders were a race of great inferiority, cannibals by habit and inclination. Sunk in a state of worse than childish imbecility, reeking in the blood of their enemies, sensible only to the passions of revenge and gluttony, they were incapable of understanding a contract to work in Australia. He knew nothing of the condition of

²⁰ *Australian*, 14, 28 September 1847. *SGSGTL*, 18 September 1847.

²¹ Lowe, *Impending Crisis*, 3-4. Lowe, LC, *SMH*, 19 May, 12 August 1847.

²² Notice of motion, 1 October 1847, NSW LC *V&P*, 1847, I.

those imported, whether they were slaves or prisoners of war at home, or the circumstances in which they had been recruited. Even so, they could not have agreed to go to New South Wales without a full knowledge of what to expect. What could these savages know of Mr Benjamin Boyd? What idea did they have of shepherding, never having seen a sheep, or how they might make themselves 'generally useful?' How could they comprehend the five years they would be required to serve? Did they understand the wages, rations and clothes specified in their contracts? Would these degraded and barbarous savages, had they understood the paltry rewards promised by their contracts, have abandoned their wives and children? What would be their fate if they disappeared into the vast solitudes of the interior to work on private estates on which no one had a right to set foot? These savages, Lowe concluded, would be reduced to abject slavery.

Robinson rose to accuse Lowe of having 'a great antipathy to blacks of all descriptions'. In 1844 Lowe had opposed a bill to allow Aborigines to give evidence in court, thereby condemning them 'to the deepest obloquy'. Boyd had done more for Aborigines than any other gentleman in the colony. The Aborigines Protection Society had commended him for doing everything to alleviate their condition, especially restraining his servants from injuring them. In answer to the charge that Boyd preferred Pacific Kanakas to the Irish, Robinson said that Boyd chose his servants according to what they were worth, 'caring nothing whether they were Negro, Coolie, or Chinese'. He assured members that a better and kinder-hearted race of people than South Sea Islanders did not exist. They were cannibals but then so were many of the native blacks of the colony. They had not been recruited by force or fraud but taken on board with their own consent and were not as ignorant as had been suggested. The term of five years in their agreements was explained to them as 'sixty moons'. While they could not read their agreements, they were no more slaves than illiterate emigrants brought from England under indentures.

Wentworth said that Kanakas were no more slaves than apprentices receiving no wages. In three or four years they would become valuable servants; until then they should receive nothing more than their subsistence. Unsatisfactory reports from the Murray suggested that the expenses of importing and employing them were likely to be great and the benefits small. If Lowe believed that a slave trade was growing up in the colony he should have applied to the Supreme Court rather than moving a motion devised 'to terrify the old women of Exeter Hall'. Lowe's motives in attacking the Boyd's character were well known in the colony but in the mother country might be regarded as an attempt to impeach the humanity and philanthropy of the colonists.

The colonial secretary could not agree that an incipient slave trade had sprung up, otherwise the government would have taken vigorous measures to suppress it. Even so, the importation of these labourers from the islands should be regarded with suspicion and closely watched. He had voted against an inquiry into emigration from the Pacific Islands because the evils arising from a mixed race population were well understood. He had also voted against inserting a clause in the Master and Servant Act giving magistrates jurisdiction over the agreements of South Sea Islanders. Some were valuable servants when employed under discipline on ships and wharves but, in the interior of the colony where there was no discipline, they would be of no use. Finally, their introduction would discourage Europeans from coming to the colony.

The attorney general pointed to the recent amendments in the Master and Servant Act as proof that the house would not sanction such an 'objectionable system'. If emigrants would not come from the United Kingdom to associate with convicts who spoke our own language and had the same feelings and habits, how much stronger would they object to men who differed from us on all these points and were cannibals. As long as persons unable to speak English came to the colony under agreements made elsewhere there would be 'much tyranny, fraud and oppression'. Rumours had reached Sydney that Boyd's recruits were kept in fetters during the voyage. If such rumours were true then a

case should be brought against Boyd under the statutes prohibiting slavery. He assured members that, while there little evidence of slavery, the executive government would ‘closely watch the trade’.

Lowe, satisfied with showing that squatters could make the land profitable only by populating it with cannibals or coolies, withdrew his motion,²³

The Legislative Council debate prompted another round of newspaper editorials. The *Sydney Chronicle* did not see how these primitive people without civilised institutions could comprehend an agreement to work in the colony. The concept of work was virtually unknown to them and they did not understand the relationship between master and servant. If Kanakas replaced the European labour force in the interior of New South Wales, ‘the barbarism, cruelty and oppression would be too sickening to contemplate’. With no understanding of English law and no means of obtaining redress for injustices, they would probably murder their oppressors. Europeans would not immigrate to the wilds of Australia peopled by cannibals.²⁴

The Gleaner argued that ‘the experience of the evils resulting from a mixed population leads us to deprecate the introduction of any class of emigrants except Europeans’. Given the present state of the British Isles, the offer of a free passage and fair wages on arrival would induce as many labourers to emigrate as are needed.²⁵

The *Port Phillip Gazette* denounced this ‘atrocious’ traffic in cannibals as ‘calculated to degrade us in the eyes of the whole world, and injure our social condition as a purely British colony’. Promoting a stream of free labour would prevent the necessity of resorting to ‘cannibal, coolie, or even convict labor’, allowing Australian colonies to progress as offshoots of the parent country.²⁶

²³ Debate, NSW LC, *SMH*, 2 October 1847.

²⁴ *SC*, 2 October 1847.

²⁵ *The Gleaner*, 2 October 1847.

The *Australian* published 'The late immigration from the South Seas (Communicated)' early in November defending Boyd. This man of 'industry, intelligence and application' had for years been calling the attention of apathetic colonial and imperial governments to labour shortages. Convinced that official efforts to supply labour would be tedious, slow and costly, he had sent an experienced naval officer to recruit 'docile and tractable men' from the islands. The experiment failed because careless and reckless legislators exempted their agreements from the Master and Servant Act. While Boyd's ships were still at sea, officers of the government, actuated by personal motives, had supported this 'unfair and *ex post facto* proviso' to frustrate his 'well digested' plans. The attorney general's opposition to coloured immigration was no surprise. He regarded 'Hindoos, Parsees or Coolies: Maoris, Malays or New Hebrideans . . . as nearly akin to the Ourang-outang of Borneo and Sumatra'. The colonial secretary, said to be not on good terms with Boyd, had allowed his ships to depart for the islands without advising him of the government's intentions to make the engagement of Kanakas difficult. Those working on stations along the Murray River were well fed and treated with kindness. They did not wish to leave their stations until white people told them that their agreements were no longer valid.²⁷

The next issue of the *Australian* explained why it had published an article expressing sentiments so repugnant to its 'frequent and indignant denunciations of this odious traffic'. The editor had not seen the article or been consulted about it before it was printed. 'We emphatically reiterate our firm conviction that the introduction of masses of New Hebridean savages into any infant community, much less one struggling with Aboriginal Savages of its own, was an infamous invasion of the public weal'. Boyd could have found many nobler races than those of Tana, such as the 'affectionate, intelligent

²⁶ PPG, 9 October 1847.

²⁷ *Australian*, 29 October 1847.

and Christianised Sandwich Kanakas'. While the government took action to stop this traffic only at the eleventh hour, Boyd should not have expected anything but failure from his ill-considered speculation.²⁸

The *Sydney Morning Herald* declared that 'that the time has come for sitting in judgement on the whole scheme'. The first of two editorials on 'The New Hebrideans' attributed the *Australian's* defence of Boyd 'if not to Mr Boyd's pen, at least to his direct and sedulous influence'. These 'children of nature' had been taken from the turmoil of their islands to the 'Arcadian glades' of New South Wales where 'guileless flocks lie down on green pastures . . . each day brings pleasant and graceful occupation, and each night calm and unbroken slumbers'. They were beyond the threat of vindictive and bloodthirsty rival tribes, death by poisoned arrows and clubs, and the prospect of being roasted alive. Yet, not content with the patient, plodding life of a shepherd, they had had travelled through the dreary wastes of the interior, 'in defiance of heat and cold, hunger and thirst . . . to lay the grievance of intolerable happiness at the feet of "Missa Boyd"'. If Boyd himself was to blame for the pecuniary loss and public ridicule he had suffered, it could be attributed to his inexcusable rashness in sending for a second batch of Kanakas before he had tested the merits of the first.²⁹

The *Sydney Morning Herald* published Boyd's response the following day. He argued that the 'unconstitutional' amendment of the Master and Servant Act exempting Pacific Kanakas from its jurisdiction would soon be declared repugnant to the laws of England by imperial authorities. A postscript claimed that the Kanakas had been happily employed washing sheep until they were 'virtually forced from my station by the white people'. They had thwarted his efforts to introduce useful and cheap labour at a time when wages had risen to a ruinous level for employers. The *Herald* responded that Boyd's complaint about

²⁸ *Australian*, 2 November 1847.

²⁹ *SMH*, 3 November 1847.

ex post facto legislation was not without ‘constitutional weight’. However, sending ships for more Kanakas so soon after the arrival of the first batch was ‘a desperate leap in the dark’ involving the interests of the savages in whose blood and sinews he was speculating, and the social welfare of the community into which they were to be introduced. Boyd defied the known antipathy of the government and the public to ‘the introduction of such degenerate elements into our population’. His claim that they had not absconded until the new law set them at liberty presumed that they were previously under compulsion. They had not served ‘Missa Boyd’ gladly and willingly as free agents ‘but with the sullen submission of helpless slaves’. The *Herald* concluded that Boyd’s attempt to recruit among ‘the tribes of unreclaimed savages’ had been a miserable failure. Even so, this ‘stirring and influential settler’ exerted himself as boldly in the cause of British immigration, and would have done honour to himself and service to the state.³⁰

The attorney general called on Boyd at his office to ascertain whether there any foundation for rumours that the Kanakas were slaves. Boyd called his two captains and Walpole and MacKenzie to Plunket’s office to set a date for the magistrates to take their statements. The police were sent to find George Bridget (Cannibal Charley) if he was still in Sydney but they were not successful. Plunkett concluded from the magistrates’ report that the rumours were unfounded but objectionable in that the criminal law could not reach them. However, the information in the statement might be useful hereafter and should be in the possession of the government. He concluded that Boyd’s speculation with Islanders had not been profitable; they soon became discontented and walked back to Sydney, creating alarm among the residents of the towns they passed along the way but they committed no violent crimes. Finally, Boyd was gradually removing the Kanakas from the colony.³¹

³⁰ *SMH*, 5 November 1847. Boyd, *SMH*, 6 November 1847.

³¹ Attorney General to colonial secretary, 25 November 1847, CO 201/286, 278-9. Molony, *Architect of Freedom*, 158-61.

Bell's Life in Sydney, a sportsman's weekly, ran an editorial on Boyd's Kanakas late in November. 'These fiendish looking cannibals have become a complete nuisance in the city', the editorial began. They walked into any open door to demand food, clothing money and money. The police do not interfere to prevent this intrusion into the residences of citizens, whereas Christian paupers are stopped from the solicitation of public charity. These anthropophagi were brought to this country by a private individual. They were seduced from their native wilds but now are mercilessly left to their fate by their self-created master. Citizens are subjected to insult and outrage from a mob of starving and consequently desperate intruders.³²

Joshua was working as a missionary teacher on Rotuma when the *Portenia* and *Velocity* anchored off the island in August 1847. On returning to Fiji in November, Joshua told Walter Lawry, superintendent of Wesleyan missions in the Pacific, that ships were recruiting men to work in New South Wales. Natives of Wea (Uvea) had jumped off the ships, swam ashore, and taken refuge with a Rotuman chief. When the chief refused to send them back, European sailors came ashore and resorted to 'harsh measures' resulting in death and injuries on both sides. On returning to New Zealand, Lawry wrote to the governor of New Zealand, Sir George Grey, urging him not to allow 'a system to grow up which is so deeply degrading to human nature, and so thoroughly anti-Christian and anti-British'. Lawry also sent the papers on the Rotuma affray to the Anti-Slavery Society in London.³³

³² *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 20 November 1847.

³³ Lawry to Sir George Grey, 22 December 1847, CO 209/59, 115-9. Lawry, *Friendly and Feejee Islands*, 218-20. 'Aboriginal slavery in the South Seas', *Colonial Intelligencer and Aborigines Friend*, July & August 1848, 47-8.

Governor Grey sent Captain J. B. Maxwell on HMS *Dido* to Rotuma in December 1847 to investigate Joshua's report.³⁴ Arriving in mid-February 1848, Maxwell was told that the *Arche d'Alliance*, a ship owned by the French Marist Fathers' *Societies de L'Oceanie*, had left Rotuma on 2 January with about 30 men from Wea (Uvea).³⁵ Maxwell searched for a day and part of the night for the eight Uveans rumored to be still on Rotuma but found only Natsum. Maxwell took statements from Natsum; Konow, a Rotuman chief; Francois Maukandier, servant to a French missionary; James Harriott, the English pilot on Rotuma; and Founmau, another Rotuman chief who supported Konow's statement given through an interpreter. Maxwell reported that British subjects had committed 'an outrage of the most serious nature, and one equally unprovoked and unjustifiable, on the inoffensive inhabitants of Rotuma'. The Rotumans were known for their peaceable dispositions and friendly conduct towards the white people with whom they had been in contact for over twenty years. Most common people in the Pacific were slaves or serfs of the chiefs, Maxwell explained, but he did not believe that the British government would tolerate any attempt to hire or purchase labourers to work in New South Wales without their consent.³⁶

The New Zealand attorney general advised Governor Grey that murder had been committed and was cognizable in colonial courts. He sent the report on the Rotuma 'outrage' and correspondence with Maxwell to the Colonial Office on 10 March 1848. A despatch reported that he had offered a reward of £200 to any person supplying information leading to the apprehension of offenders involved in the shooting of Mushevek. Reward notices translated into native languages would produce 'a useful effect' on lawless British subjects scattered throughout the Pacific Islands by showing

³⁴ Sir George Grey to Captain Maxwell, 23 December 1847, CO 209/59, 111-3.

³⁵ 'A Friend of Captain Marceau's', AC, 2 May 1848.

³⁶ Lawry to Sir George Grey, 22 December 1847, CO 209/59, 115-9.

them they would be liable to be tried for murder. The natives would be assured they could look to the British government for redress against outrages similar that on Rotuma. The civil secretary to the New Zealand government sent a copy of Maxwell's report to the colonial secretary of New South Wales.³⁷

T. F. Elliot, assistant undersecretary for land and emigration at the Colonial Office, minuted that the authorities in New South Wales and New Zealand would have to determine the feasibility of any trial and punishment for those responsible for the Rotuma 'outrage'. General measures for suppressing the removal of natives from the islands, unless justified by some extreme and general evil and supported by the overwhelming force of public opinion, would be difficult to secure and implement. Any interference with the free emigration of these native races might do them more harm than good. Happily, the failure of Boyd's venture would not encourage imitation. 'For these reasons', he concluded, 'while I hope that that exemplary punishment would be inflicted on any British subject as could be convicted of convicted of violence to these poor Natives, I doubt that it will be deemed advisable that any general measures against the shipment and conveyance of them in British vessels should be founded on one or two cases of outrage'.

Herman Merivale, permanent undersecretary at the Colonial Office, minuted that nothing more could be said about this alleged criminal affair and advised that local authorities should decide if further proceedings were warranted. Governor Grey should be commended for his efforts to use all legal means to punish the offenders. Merivale concluded that the subject was one of 'extreme difficulty' requiring greater consideration than he was able to give it immediately. He agreed that the colonial authorities should decide whether criminal proceedings be undertaken but urged that criminal charges be

³⁷ Maxwell to Sir George Grey, 4 March 1848; Minutes from enquiry relative to an affray between some natives of Rotuma and the crews of two English vessels, CO 209/59, 121-40. Civil secretary to the governor of New Zealand to the New South Wales colonial secretary, 15 October 1848, 4/2816, SARNSW. Lawry, *Friendly and Fiji Islands*, 218-220.

laid for 'publicity's sake'. The Colonial Office asked the Treasury to approve expenditure of £200 by Governor Grey for the reward and sent Maxwell's report to the Foreign Office. Earl Grey agreed that little could be done to pursue the perpetrators of this this 'atrocious crime'.³⁸ He sent similar despatches to the governors of New Zealand and New South Wales acknowledging the great difficulty of punishing the parties guilty of this outrage. The most effective way of guarding against such abuses, he advised Governor FitzRoy, was to exercise 'vigilant superintendence' over the treatment of the natives in the South Seas in the colony to ensure that their relations with employers did not approach the condition of slavery.³⁹

Sir George Grey, four days after sending Captain Maxwell's report on the Rotuma 'affray' to the Colonial Office, sent another dispatch to Earl Grey informing him that the chiefs and people of the Friendly Islands (Tahiti) and Feejee (Fiji) wished to follow New Zealand in being annexed by Great Britain. As British subjects, they would advance in civilisation and disturbances such as had occurred recently on Rotuma would be prevented. Pacific islands were being corrupted by Europeans seeking refuge and importing in supplies of arms and ammunition. Elliot minuted that it was 'impossible not to recoil at the idea of attempting to found a new Empire in the Pacific' just to remedy 'the evils of licence and disorder' introduced by roving sailors. The recent founding of South Australia and New Zealand had cost the imperial government no less than half a million pounds. Questions of deficient revenue and a 'distressed' population (in the United Kingdom) had to be considered. Earl Grey agreed that the proposal was impossible but he asked that a letter be sent to the Foreign Office suggesting that consuls be sent to Tonga

³⁸ Sir George Grey to Earl Grey, 10 March 1848; Elliot's minute, 30 June 1848; Merivale's Minute, 1 July 1848; Earl Grey's minute, 11 July 1848, CO 209/59, 100-103; 103; 104; 104.

³⁹ Earl Grey to Sir George Grey, 29 July 1848; Earl Grey to FitzRoy, CO209/59, 105-6; 107-10. Merivale to Addington (Foreign Office), 30 July 1849, CO 201/412.

and Feejee to advise the natives on establishing governments. Earl Grey concluded that ‘the expense which such an extension of empire would necessarily occasion would be larger than Her Majesty’s Advisers would think themselves justified in proposing to Parliament’.⁴⁰

Earl Grey sent the papers on the Rotuma outrage to the governor of New South Wales. The New Zealand authorities would attempt to gain evidence against those involved in the crimes but bringing the offenders to justice would be difficult, he explained. British subjects might be stopped from gaining any advantage over South Sea Islanders brought to New South Wales by not allowing them to be ‘brought into relations towards their employers, which may approach to a condition of Slavery’. Pursuing those who had committed this ‘atrocious crime’ was unlikely to be successful. While the government wanted the Kanakas removed from the colony at Boyd’s expense, the amended Master and Servant, by nullifying their indentures, had absolved Boyd from any responsibility for their welfare or repatriation. Except for the attorney general’s inquiry in November 1847 on the recruitment of the Islanders, the imperial government had adopted a policy of non-interference.⁴¹ FitzRoy informed Earl Grey that the New Zealand governor had sent him a statement on the Rotuma outrage and the consequent proceedings of his government. The New South Wales colonial secretary had sent Captain Maxwell’s report to the Water Police magistrate and the acting senior police magistrate in Sydney with instructions ‘to use their utmost endeavours to trace out the offences’.⁴²

⁴⁰ Sir George Grey to Earl Grey, 14 March 1848; Elliot’s minute, 30 June 1848; Grey’s minute, 11 July 1849, CO 209/59, 168-180; 186; 186. Earl Grey to Sir George Grey, 9 October 1848, CO406/9, 64-6. Rutherford, *Sir George Grey*, 268-71.

⁴¹ Earl Grey to FitzRoy, 29 April 1848, CO 202/54, 266-8.

⁴² FitzRoy to Earl Grey, 1 March 1849; Gardiner’s minute, 5 July 1849; Merivale’s minute. 6 July 1849; Merivale to Addington, 30 July 1849, 201/412, 17-24; 11-13; 13; 14; 15-16.

The magistrates took statements, this time on oath, from Kirsopp, Lancaster, John Moore, a seaman on the *Velocity*, and MacKenzie, a sightseeing passenger. Kirsopp was prepared to rebut the statement of the Rotuman chief to Maxwell but needed time to collect evidence. He declared that the natives of the Pacific Islands were 'liars and thieves' who would not hesitate to tell an untruth. Rotuman chiefs had conspired to lure the natives of Uvea to leave the *Velocity* so they could be put to work in the yam plantations. He went ashore with six men, taking a pistol and rifles but leaving five carbines in the boat, to ask the chiefs to let the Uveans to return to the ships. When Rhodes, the second mate, remonstrated with one of the chiefs and tripped in the ensuing scuffle, a Rotuman seized his rifle. Kirsopp said he ordered his men back to the boat but, outnumbered by 40 Rotumans, some with muskets, he threatened to shoot Mushevek unless they were not allowed to leave. When four Rotumans threw him to the ground, slashing his arm with a butcher's knife, he shot Mushevek with his pistol in self-defence.⁴³

John Moore testified that Kirsopp, Rhodes, Abraham and himself had gone to the chief to persuade him to go with them to the boat. When the chief refused, he and Abraham took him by his arms, inciting the other natives to rush at Kirsopp and Rhodes. They threw Kirsopp to the ground, cutting his arm with a knife, and took a rifle from Rhodes. Kirsopp shot one of the men holding him down with a pistol and then ordered his men back to the boat. After they pushed off, natives fired at them from shore, killing Rhodes. Moore was adamant that Kirsopp would have been killed if he had not shot the chief but that neither he, Rhodes nor Abraham had fired a shot.⁴⁴

Lancaster testified that Kirsopp had come on board the *Portenia* on the morning of 20 August to tell him he was going ashore to recover the men who had run away. He said that the natives seemed hostile and suggested sending a boat from the *Portenia* to

⁴³ Kirsopp's statement, 22 June 1848, CO 201/412, 27-35.

⁴⁴ Moore's statement, 23 June 1848, CO 201/412, 51-3.

accompany him. Kirsopp laughed, explained that he was friendly with Konon and other chiefs, and he was in no danger of being attacked. Lancaster did not see Kirsopp again until he returned about noon with body of Rhodes in the boat. From what he had heard on Rotuma, Lancaster had no doubt that Konon had entrapped the men from Uvea with the purpose of enslaving them. MacKenzie told the inquiry that Kirsopp spent four days on shore searching for the men and negotiating with the chiefs for their return. He came back the *Velocity* just before noon on 20 August with a wounded forearm and the body of Rhodes in the boat. He told MacKenzie that Rhodes had been killed in an affray after allowing himself to be tripped up and his rifle taken away.⁴⁵

The attorney general, in reporting the magistrates' findings to the colonial secretary, commented that Kirsopp, after making every exertion to recover the men from Uvea, had imprudently attempted to seize Konan as a hostage for their return. Kirsopp had shot and killed Mushevek when his life was in imminent peril. The natives retaliated by killing the second mate and wounding a seaman while he was helping to push the boat off the beach. Moore's statement supported Kirsopp's version of the affray. The magistrates described Mackenzie as 'a gentleman of high standing and unimpeachable integrity' whose disinterested testimony revealed the designs of Rotuman chiefs.⁴⁶

The attorney general agreed with the magistrates that Kirsopp's life had been in danger when he shot Mushevek dead, and concluded that the available evidence did not appear to warrant any prosecutions. FitzRoy agreed, sending a dispatch to Earl Grey arguing that there was not sufficient evidence to warrant a prosecution and it was unlikely that any other evidence could be procured. He assured Earl Grey that he would

⁴⁵ Lancaster's statement, 22 June 1848; Mackenzie's statement, 22 June 1848, CO 201/412, 47-9; 33, 38-45.

⁴⁶ The magistrates report of the inquiry on the alleged murder on Rotuma to the colonial secretary, 23 June 1848, CO 201/412, 24,

exercise a vigilant superintendence of any Pacific Islanders brought to the colony to prevent employers engaging them under conditions approaching slavery.

Elliot minuted: 'It was not expected that much immediate good would come from the attempt to bring to justice the offenders in this case, although it was necessary to show that the Government were not indifferent and were resolved to oppose any attempt improperly to obtain the services of the Natives of the neighbouring Islands to ill-use them'. Earl Grey's parliamentary undersecretary closed the proceedings with the laconic observation that they 'carry a rather singular account of the state of society in some of the South Sea Islands visited by Europeans'.⁴⁷

Humanitarian and anti-slavery interests in England and missionaries in the South Pacific protested against the recruiting of native labour in the islands. The *Samoan Reporter* declared in March 1848 that the recruiting of Islanders 'will be attended with evils, which the friends of aborigines and of missions everywhere cannot sufficiently deprecate'. The attempt to recover the 40 natives of Uvea who had jumped off Boyd's ships at Rotuma had led to several deaths. Natives were lured on board the ships in the expectation of going to a foreign country, receiving gifts and then being returned home. In fact, the climate and diseases prevalent in New South Wales would create havoc and death, preventing many natives from ever returning. Tribes would take revenge for losing their relatives and friends with the blood of the first white man within reach of their clubs. Europeans would find it more dangerous to approach the natives, thereby hindering trade and missionary enterprise in the western Pacific. Accordingly, friends of aborigines and missionaries should exert themselves to end the traffic.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Attorney general to colonial secretary, 1 August 1848, CO 201/412, 17-53. FitzRoy to Grey 1 March 1849, Elliot's minute, 5 July 1849; Hawes's minute, 5 July 1849, CO 201/412, 11-13.

⁴⁸ *Samoan Reporter*, March 1848.

The *Colonial Intelligencer and Aborigines Friend* published many of the documents relating to Boyd's Kanakas.⁴⁹ *The Times* commented that, if males only were continued to be imported, 'there can be no doubt of a repetition of the evils which not many years back were denounced in the first attempts at Coolie emigration to the Mauritius'.⁵⁰ A speaker at a meeting of the Society for the Promotion of Colonization in London late in 1847 asked why employers in New South Wales been compelled to import 'barbarous tribes' when thousands of their Christian brethren in the British Isles were starving.⁵¹

Dr Lang gave evidence to a House of Lords committee on colonisation from Ireland in June 1848. He was asked if individuals had introduced 'semi-barbarous Labour' into New South Wales. Benjamin Boyd had introduced upwards of fifty South Sea Islanders from the New Hebrides, Lang replied. The committee then asked if he had considered the moral and social evils arising from the introduction and perpetuation of 'Castes of inferior races'. Allowing such an inferior race into New South Wales, Lang replied, would create the greatest social evils imaginable.

Roger Therry, a judge in New South Wales Supreme Court, testified nine days after Lang. He explained that that labour shortages in colony were forcing employers to hire good, bad and indifferent servants alike. Just before he left Sydney there was an importation of semi-savages from the New Hebrides and adjacent islands. They were 'certainly deemed a most objectionable Description of Persons to import; and the Importation raised a great Complaint and Outcry from many in the colony against the Gentlemen who imported them'. Some were driven off the sheep stations by English servants. The law regarded them as savages who could not be effectively controlled. The gentleman importing them derived little benefit from their labour. When asked whether

⁴⁹ *Colonial Intelligencer and Aborigines Friend* (ns) II, 47-8, 88-91, 115-6, 120, 211.

⁵⁰ *The Times*, 2 November 1847.

⁵¹ *Bell's Life in Sydney*, 8 April 1848.

the establishment of an inferior, subordinate and a semi-savage caste would be dangerous to the future interests of the colony, Therry replied that it would deteriorate and degenerate the British character of the population which all the colonists were most anxious to preserve.⁵²

The Times, in reporting the evidence taken by the committee in August 1848, observed that the need for labour in New South Wales was so urgent that the Legislative Council had considered importing men from India, China and the South Seas 'although the evil of engrafting barbarous or inferior races on the population was clearly foreseen'.⁵³

Government officials, missionaries, naval officers and journalists who studied the evidence on the recruitment of Boyd's Kanakas broadly agreed that the methods adopted were a mixture of misrepresentation, cajolery and bribery. Deck hands and passengers on Boyd's recruiting ships testified that none of the Kanakas had been fettered, confined below deck, or prevented from leaving the ship at any time. Some Kanakas changed their minds about going to New South Wales and swam ashore at the first landfall. MacKenzie observed that the number of Pacific Islanders on the ships at any time was in a state of constant flux.⁵⁴ Kirsopp testified that he had not found slavery on any of the islands visited except for Rotuma where prisoners of war were forced to work in yam plantations. Rotuman chiefs stopped the Uveans returning to the Boyd's ships to keep them as slaves.⁵⁵ Far from selling their subjects into slavery, chiefs often stopped them from going New South Wales. When a chief did allow some tribesmen to go to 'Sydney' for a 'holiday',

⁵² Lang's evidence, 1 June 1848, qs 2511-6; Therry's evidence, 9 June 1848, qs 3102-4, 3106-10, SC colonisation from Ireland 1848.

⁵³ *The Times*, 18 August 1848.

⁵⁴ MacKenzie's statement, 12 November 1847, CO 201/385, 283.

⁵⁵ Kirsopp's statement, 22 June 1848, CO 201/412, 28-29.

they sometimes sent a brother or son to go with them.

Captain Erskine described the ethnically mixed and migratory Loyalty Islanders as ‘wandering spirits’. Continuous labour without any immediate and visible result was unpalatable to savages accustomed to looking only to the immediate satisfaction of their daily wants.⁵⁶ Kanakas came on board Boyd’s ships out of curiosity about the outside world. ‘Sydney’ was a source of the magical wealth brought to them by sandalwood traders. European clothes, fishhooks and cutting tools and firearms bestowed power and prestige on those possessing them. Lancaster told recruits that ‘they would have muskets and powder, Shirts and Trousers and plenty to eat’ but admitted not being able to explain anything to them about money.⁵⁷ Such promises were tempting but working for European goods for ‘sixty moons’ at sixpence a week was beyond the Kanakas’ understanding.

Domestic slavery was said to exist on the larger Polynesian islands ruled by powerful chiefs, such as New Zealand, Tahiti and Samoa. Captain Maxwell drew parallels with the origins of the African slave trade given that despotic native chiefs had sold these ‘Polynesian Negroes’ to Boyd’s recruiters.⁵⁸ Anti-slavery societies in England and missionaries in the South Seas alleged that Boyd had been engaged in slavery but they could not produce conclusive evidence. The Colonial Office, on receiving Maxwell’s reports, instructed the governor of New South Wales to stop British subjects from gaining any advantage over South Sea Islanders by not allowing them to be ‘brought into relations towards their employers, which may approach to a condition of Slavery’.⁵⁹

Analogies between Boyd’s importation of Kanakas and free British emigration were based on false conceptions about primitive society and culture. Colonists supporting the

⁵⁶ Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise*, 366.

⁵⁷ Lancaster’ statement, 14-15 October 1847, CO 201/386, 271, 274, 276

⁵⁸ Maxwell to Grey, 4 March 1848, CO 209/59, 123-4, 128.

⁵⁹ Earl Grey to FitzRoy, 29 April 1848, CO 202/54, 266-8,

introduction of Pacific Island labourers attributed their barbarous and objectionable customs largely to the miseries of 'overpopulation'. Malthusian explanations for the willingness of Pacific Islanders to exchange their barbarous mode of life for the comforts of civilisation had no foundation. Explorers noted the fertility of the volcanic islands of the New Hebrides such as Tana but the Loyalty Islands, consisting of coral reefs, had only small patches fertile land. Most rejected the idea that hunger was the main reason for cannibalism. Mackenzie compared the abundance of fresh food on most islands compared with that consumed by the lower orders in the British Isles. Lifu was the only island where food appeared to be scarce but he attributed this to warfare between the tribes. The Kanakas brought to New South Wales were not seen to being undernourished.⁶⁰

Captain Erskine observed that a variety of 'inducements' and 'pretenses' had been used to lure men on to the ships for the ostensible purpose of 'seeing the world'.⁶¹ John Inglis recorded a meeting with one of Boyd's captains on Aneityum while on a three-month cruise through Melanesia on HMS Havannah in 1850. The captain assured Inglis that the men brought to New South Wales by Boyd in 1847 had come willingly. Inglis questioned Kanakas who had returned from New South Wales. 'From their own accounts they were well used', he recorded, 'but, like all captive exiles, they long to be home'.⁶² The *Port Phillip Patriot* suggested that 'the savages were under the impression that they were merely to have paid a flying visit to Australia, more for pleasure than business, and that already having satisfied their curiosity, they are resolved to return'.⁶³

⁶⁰ Shineberg, *Trading Voyages of Andre Cheyne*, 51-2, 103, 105, 126-7, 129, 164. Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise*, 103, 126-7, 164, 333. Turner, *Nineteen Years in Polynesia*, 76, 82, Inglis, *Report on a missionary tour in the New Hebrides*, 63. Murray, *Missions in Western Polynesia*, 137, 222. MacKenzie's statement, 12 November 1847, CO 201/385, 283-5.

⁶¹ Erskine, *Journal of a Cruise*, 342.

⁶² Inglis, *In the New Hebrides*, 199.

⁶³ *PPP*, 26 October 1847.

Most colonists agreed that Boyd's Kanakas were 'a dirty race of savages' and 'ferocious cannibals', polluted with the vices of heathenism, and incapable of understanding a contract to work in a civilised British colony. Claims that primitive Pacific Islanders would not willingly work in New South Wales, Boyd contended, had no more substance than the allegations of slavery. Kirsopp, on returning from his first recruiting voyage, reported that the islands visited were short of food for eight months of the year. The emigration of Pacific Islanders would eradicate starvation that was the main cause for cannibalism, infanticide and warfare in the islands. Boyd suggested that Pacific Islanders were willing to emigrate because the social and economic conditions on small Pacific islands were comparable to those in the United Kingdom. Like our own unfortunate countrymen, he argued, these docile and tractable race of men, driven to cannibalism by hunger, could find no demand for their labour in their islands and would gladly give their labour in exchange for food.

The repatriation of Boyd's Kanakas was accompanied with rumours and recriminations. The *Argus* reported that four Kanakas stranded at Deniliquin had described their custom of strangling the wives of men absent for more than twelve moons, and therefore were presumed dead.⁶⁴ The *Isabella Anna* arrived in Sydney from the New Hebrides with news that the natives of Tana believed that all the men who had gone to Sydney had been murdered by the white people. The wives of these men had been strangled according to custom. The *Australian* accused Robert Towns, part-owner of the *Isabella Anna*, of fomenting this malicious rumour because Boyd's ships had recruited all of the best sandalwood cleaners on Tana, forcing up the price of their labour. The *Sydney Morning Herald* claimed that Boyd had paid the *Australian* to publish these articles. Captain

⁶⁴ *Argus*, 7 December 1847. *SMH*, 22 December 1847.

Bradley on the *Isabella Anna* pointed out that a few women had been strangled on Aneityum before Captain Paddon intervened to ‘put a stop to the carnage in a most praiseworthy manner by threatening to make an example of the natives who should destroy any more of the women’.⁶⁵

The *Sydney Morning Herald* had the last word on Boyd’s Kanakas. An obituary in 1854, following an expedition to Guadalcanal year confirming that he had been killed by the natives, implied that none of the Kanakas had been returned to their homes, for which Boyd was responsible: ‘The savages, originally kidnapped, were not restored to their own islands, where their countrymen would have avenged them, but landed among a hostile people, by whom they were destroyed. Neglect of those elementary principles of justice, known even to the most uncivilised nations, cost Mr. Boyd his life’.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *SGSGTL*, 18 December 1847. *Australian*, 21, 24 December 1847. *SMH*, 20, 22 December 1847. *Atlas*, 25 December 1847. Bradley, *SMH*, 22 December 1847. *Australian*, 21, 24 December 1847.

⁶⁶ *SMH*, 6 December 1854.