

FOOTNOTE TO A 'HISTORY WAR'
(archive box—no. 2)

i

they are nearer white
than half caste &
are but idle bodies

irresponsible, hopeless &
worthless, they are
a drain on our good will

insolent & defiant
they will not respond
to our kindness

or our care

ii

we are sorry
to trouble your souls
with our sickness

we suffer influenza
typhoid & sores
we suffer, Amen

also we are late
to wish you respectfully
a most happy new year

better late than never

iii

he is one pure
aboriginal man
of good behaviour

he carries a rancid leg—
its cure is medicine
& regular ration

he is sober & steady
a good working man
for a hard working day

who carries a rancid leg

iv

my colour debars me
my child is dead
& I am lost

we are broken into parts
our home left in the wind
& it grows colder here

my wife is aborigine
I am half caste
and I am, Sir, dutifully yours

I await your response

v

he wears a suit [issue no. 6]
hat [issue no. 7] & possesses
one pair of blankets

she has on loan
one mullet net &
two perch nets

their children are gone:
one [toxaemia]
one [pneumonia]

one [ditto]

vi

I am nearly bootless
& my colour is a curse
[too white, too dark]

I am to be recommended
within unit 4 [subfile 3]
for licence renewal

I am to be approved by you
via certificate [no. 71]
herewith in this body

within me, within me

vii

in the name of the Lord
we are servants of Christ
called as Apostles to Him

Praise be the Lord
& the Gospel of God—
the word of the testament

Brothers and Sisters
of the dark races
at prayer with Christ

become pure in the Lord, Amen

viii

we are in need of
a flannel, blanket
towel, hat & wire

1 shirt [white]
1 trousers [working]
1 tweed suit

needle & cotton
1 night dress &
1 chemise

we are, of course, obliged

ix

desire to report
half caste child
5 years of age

passed away
3 o'clock it was
just yesterday, of:

whooping cough
cerebral phlegm
& bronchitis

in the service of His Majesty

TONY BIRCH

x

I seek with words
your gratitude
& kindness

to see my wife
my children
across the still water

I seek to touch
my daughter's
skin & heart

I seek only this from you