

William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, to the Minister for the Interior, John McEwen, Canberra, 19 April 1939, National Archives of Australia, A659, 1940/1/858

I was very distressed to read in the "Age" of 30th ultimo the following news from Canberra:

"One of the chief steps taken by the Department will aim to secure uniformity of Commonwealth aboriginal laws with those of West Australia, where the most modern legislation has been framed to date".

I do not regard all I read as being authentic for I am misreported myself but I would like to submit the following for your investigation:

1. While the legislation of West Australia is the latest it is the most reactionary in Australia, bringing my people into serfdom. Under this legislation a large number of regulations were promulgated and the whole of them have been disallowed by the West Australian Parliament. The Government, under pressure from Public opinion has agreed to bring in new legislation and then new regulations and is to call in the dissenting interests to confer in respect of the matter.

2. The man inspiring the legislation and framing the regulations is regarded by us and most aboriginal emancipatory organisations as the greatest enemy of our race. His policy of absorption of aborigines into the white population is as unfavorably viewed by us as by the white organisations. We prefer the administration of Mr Chinnery to Mr Neville.

May we therefore claim the investigation into the proposals by Mr Chinnery and the framing of suggested laws by the Federal Government. The announced policy of the Federal Government can be a basis for such legislation and we would suggest that the Government do in Federal matters what the West Australian government has agreed to do, viz:— consult missionary and ameliorative organisations including the Natives' own organisation. We will have pleasure in submitting a full policy for all classes and conditions of aborigines if you permit.

Thanking you for past interest and asking that we be assured of the same sympathetic treatment, helping us to become what we wish to "Australia's finest asset, the aborigines".