

Workers' Voice, 3 June 1939, p. 2, Aborigines' 1/8½ for 8-Hour Day

Affirming that a Royal Commission should be appointed to examine the aboriginal problem, Mr George Patten stated in a "Heckle Hour" debate over 3DB last Saturday that an impartial inquiry would reveal conditions which would shock the public confidence into forcing the authorities to make sweeping reforms.

Or Patten, who is himself a full-blooded aborigine, is a publicist for the Australian Aborigines' League and the Aborigines' Assistance Committee.

He said that some of the facts which would be revealed by a Royal Commission were:—

That the New South Wales Aborigines' Protection Board allows each adult aborigine under its care 3/9 a week for food, clothing and housing: with a food allowance of 1/9 a week for each child.

That aboriginal men are forced to work 16 hours a week for their 3/9 — equal to 1/8½ for an eight-hour day.

DENIED EDUCATION

That Aboriginal girls are forced into domestic service, where they have 2/- a week taken from their wages, and placed into a trust fund, so that their real wage is 1/9 a week.

That aboriginal children are prevented from receiving education beyond the third grade.

That full-blooded aboriginal returned soldiers are not allowed to receive war pensions.

That in Western Australia aborigines receive only 30/6 a year, and that not 5 per cent of the aborigines in Western Australia receive any education.

"We have been brought to the fringe of civilisation, and then abandoned," Mr Patten said. "We are being forcibly kept in the stone age.

"The aborigines want to be allowed to live and work, and be educated like anybody else. We want citizen rights — and a royal commission as a first step to getting them."