

***Adelaide Advertiser*, 27 October 1937, p. 25, “Stain on Our Reputation”. Natives’ Petition to King “Should Not be Necessary”**

“The petition to the King from the aborigines will certainly stain the good reputation of Australia for fair treatment of the native race,” said the secretary of the Aborigines’ Friends’ Association (Rev. J. H. Sexton) yesterday.

“A wrong impression will be created throughout Europe that nothing is being done to help the aborigines, whereas a great deal is being done at present” added Mr. Sexton. “The State and Federal Government, as well as missions, have never been more active than now in furthering the interests of the aborigines, and it is doubtful whether any political representation would further advance their well-being. The signatories to the petition are mainly people of mixed blood and are not content like the old aborigines to accept their fate in the old uncomplaining spirit.

“There are still 50,000 full-blooded aborigines roaming about Australia, whose chief concern is to get daily necessities. They suffer hardships in times of drought, but little is heard about their needs. Those of mixed blood, however, are of different calibre. They aspire to something beyond the daily struggle for existence. They should be removed from the scope of aboriginal regulations and given a chance to enter the life of the community and come under white men’s laws. In nearly every case they are the children of white fathers.

“The question of color has complicated this problem because half-castes will not be content to remain for ever classed with aborigines’, continued Mr. Sexton. ‘At a recent conference of Government representatives at Canberra it was decided that the destiny of the natives of mixed blood should be their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and it was recommended that efforts be directed to that end. If this policy could be advanced the attention of Australia could rightly be directed to the nation’s real obligations to the full blooded aborigines, whose integrity as a race should be preserved.

Need For Training

“When detribalised the natives and their children should receive some education and training for service. It must be remembered that the main work of our great inland cattle stations is still done by full-blooded aborigines, who as stockmen are not easily surpassed.

“There would be no need for the petition to the King if the Commonwealth Parliament did its duty and made the care of the aborigines a national responsibility. What could better celebrate the 150th anniversary of the foundation of Australia than the emancipation of the natives from State control and the placing of them under the care and protection of the Commonwealth?

The Chief Protector of Aborigines (Mr M. T. McLean) said that according to the last census, taken in 1934, full-blooded aborigines in Australia totalled 54,848. Half-castes numbered 21,399 making a total of 76,547. In the Western Australian total of 22,000, an estimate of 10,000 was included as the number believed to live outside the influence of Europeans. The Northern Territory’s total was 17,000, Queensland

12,000, South Australia 1,740, New South Wales 1,008, and Victoria 53.

The petition, signed by 1,814 aborigines from all parts of Australia, was prepared by Mr W. Cooper, hon. secretary of the Australian Aborigines, League, and asks, among other things for a representative in the Federal Parliament.