

William Cooper, Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, Appeal to Church Leaders, 27 December 1937, P. R. Stephensen Papers, Mitchell Library, MS 1284

Petition to His Majesty

You will be aware, from the references in the press, that the aborigines have presented a petition to His Majesty King George, praying the exercise of the Royal Prerogative to —

“prevent the extinction of the aboriginal race and to give better conditions for all, granting us the power to propose a member of Parliament, of our own blood or a white man known to have studied our needs and to be in sympathy with our race, to represent us in the Federal Parliament”.

This petition was signed by 1814 natives from every State, excepting Tasmania, where none of our people remain, and from the Commonwealth Territories. Many more would have signed but for the fear of reaction to their disadvantage and many of these would sign now if the petition were in course of preparation.

We have been approached by many who have suggested that we should organise a petition of white men praying for the same relief for aborigines. Of course the Organisation of such an appeal is beyond our resources and so we submit the following for your consideration:—

If you are favorable to the request, would you, as the Head of your Denomination, write to the Prime Minister in support. Would you kindly forward the matter for the consideration of the ministers of your denomination, requesting that, if they are agreeable, they too should write in support. Then it may be possible that the various Churches connected with your denomination might be given an opportunity of expressing their opinion, which could be forwarded to the Prime Minister.

In this way the very definite public opinion of the Christian community, could be vocalised and the Government be made aware of its sincerity.

The present Federal Government has assured the natives of its sincere desire to do all possible to help them and have given an earnest of their good intentions by the issue of a policy far in advance of any previously contemplated. The support of the public will assure its implementation. Of course the Federal Government has only power to legislate for natives in the Territories but we are sure that this must inevitably lead to similar relief in the sphere of the States.

Thank you,

For and on behalf of the Australian Aborigines.