

***The Age*, 18 January 1938, p. 14, Day of Mourning. Aborigines Not in Sympathy**

The Minister for the Interior (Mr McEwen) has received, through Rev. J.H. Sexton, Honorary secretary of the Aborigines' Friends' Association, a letter from Dr David Unaipon, a full-blooded aborigine, in which Mr Unaipon, speaking for the aborigines of Australia, takes exception to the proposal that the opening day of the anniversary celebrations in Sydney should be regarded by Australian aborigines as a day of mourning, Mr Unaipon is an authority on native legends, on which he has written a book. Mr Sexton's letter reads:—

David Unaipon a well known native leader in Australia, a full-blooded aboriginal, and a prince of his tribe has asked me to forward you the enclosed letter for your information. He is not in sympathy with the day of wailing being staged in Sydney on Foundation day. He considers it will only harm Australia abroad, and he says you can make what use you like of his letter. David is the author of a booklet on native legends, and is a good speaker, with an excellent English vocabulary, is very gentlemanly in bearing, and, you will see by his message, a man of common sense. The wailing day will be availed of to criticize Governments and generally finding fault, instead of showing appreciation of the efforts being made to aid the aborigines.

Mr Unaipon's letter was as follows:—

This day of mourning is a huge mistake, because it is of political character. The movement is largely an emotional one, sponsored by sympathetic white people and half-castes in order to call attention to native grievances. But the 50,000 full-blooded aboriginals will have very little part in this matter. These will stoically and silently await the coming of a new day.

The signs of this are already on the horizon, for the Prime Minister of Australia has already promised a Commonwealth review of the position. The most effective way of bringing this about is not by traducing Australia and giving it a bad reputation abroad, but by expressing appreciation of what is being done and contemplated for the aborigines. The many hopeful signs of an awakening interest in the native races is a cause for rejoicing, rather than weeping. The most effective way of helping the natives is not in weeping and bemoaning the past, but by acting in the living present. There have been grave faults on both sides, causing misunderstanding and friction, and the exclusion of natives from the Federal constitution intensified the problem, because this left a national concern to be handled by State Governments.

As a representative of the race, I would like to urge that the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Australia should be celebrated by the inauguration of a new programme, by which all the privileges of the dominant race should be given to the blacks. The time is past to talk of segregation. Let my people come more fully into the national family. There have been enough scientific investigations already, and no new facts have been brought to light, and yet there is still a plea to segregate the natives, keeping them in practically bush museums for scientific purposes.

The natives should not be kept in the cradle any longer. The aborigines want to be released from the ties that bind them to a decayed system, and want to be associated practically with the whites in the development of Australia, and they ask that the 150<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of the continent may be marked by the wiping off of old scores and the inauguration of a worthy nation programme for the promotion of their well being.