

***Argus*, 1 February 1938, p. 2, Future of Blacks. Governments to Confer. Prime Minister's Response**

A promise to call a conference of the Commonwealth and State Governments to consider the future of the aborigines was made by the Prime Minister (Mr Lyons) today to a deputation representing the Aborigines' Progressive Association.

The deputation waited on both Mr Lyons and the Minister for the Interior (Mr McEwen).

The president of the association (Mr J. T. Patten) said that the deputation asked as a matter of urgency that the Commonwealth Government make a special financial grant to each of the State Governments in proportion to the number of aborigines in each State to supplement the existing grants for aborigines. Such aid should be applied to increasing the rations and improving the housing conditions of aborigines at present under State control.

#### Federal Control

The association, said Mr. Patten, advocated Commonwealth Government control of all aboriginal affairs; the appointment of a Commonwealth Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs, the Minister to have full Cabinet rank; the appointment of an administrative head of the proposed Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the administrator to be advised by an advisory board consisting of six persons, three of whom at least should be of aboriginal blood, and nominated by the Aborigines' Progressive Association. The aim of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs should be to raise all aborigines throughout the Commonwealth to full citizen status and civil equality with the whites.

Mr Lyons said that there would have to be an alteration of the Constitution or else agreement by all the States before the Commonwealth Government could take control of all aborigines. The Commonwealth Government was prepared to call a conference of the States to discuss the whole question with a view to finding what was best to be done. The Commonwealth Government was sympathetic with the deputation, but some of the complaints made should be placed before the State authorities.

#### Conference Decisions

Resolutions advocating for aborigines the rights and privileges enjoyed by other inhabitants of Australia were passed at the aborigines' "day of mourning" conference in Melbourne last night. The president of the Australian Aborigines' League (Mr. A. P. A. Burdeu) presided.

The resolutions contained proposals that all public services and public works be open to aborigines qualified to fill such positions; that no application of the White Australia policy be detrimental to aborigines; that education for children on aboriginal settlements be of the same standard as for white children, with the same facilities and encouragement for secondary education; that the training of natives be with the view to their being able to compete with others in the same industries; and that natives be given facilities to work for their own profit on aboriginal lands.