

***Herald* (Melbourne), 6 February 1939, p. 2, Agitator Blamed for Native Discontent**

Claims that 350 natives on the Cumeroogunga aboriginal station were being underfed and treated without proper understanding, have been made to the Australian Aborigines' Protection League [sic] by representatives of natives who during the weekend left the station and camped on the Victorian side of the Murray, near Barmah.

The manager of the station (Mr A. J. McQuiggan) said today that the natives had been duped by a man who had tried to organise a "day of mourning" for aborigines during the Sydney sesqui-centenary celebrations, and preached that they should agitate for a federation with full citizen rights.

The president of the Aborigines Protection League (Mr A. P. Burdeu) said today that three natives had come to Melbourne and told him 300 had left the station.

INQUIRY ASKED

Mr McQuiggan said that about 170 of the 350 had left, and he had wired today for authority to send them rations, although they were camping in Victoria.

The Protection League has telegraphed the New South Wales Government and Opposition, asking for an inquiry into the administration of the settlement, which the natives demand before returning.

Mr Burdeu said the deputation from the settlement told him that 300 natives, including the most reliable men and women, had left the station because of what they alleged was "continued tyranny," after discontent had been simmering there for months.

The starvation rations had also produced high mortality, the deputation had alleged. This, he said, was the official list, issued under instructions from the New South Wales Aborigines Protection Board:

For each adult each week — 8lb flour, 1lb meat, 8oz dripping, ½lb, oatmeal, salt, 2lb sugar, 12oz jam, syrup or honey, 2lb potatoes, ½lb. rice, ¼lb. tea, ¼lb. baking powder, ½lb onions, 1 pint milk, or, if that were not available, ½lb milk powder, a day.

Expectant mothers were given, in addition, 2oz of butter and extra milk each day.

Children under 14 were given half-rations.

The manager of the station said that the natives had been told by an agitator that if they did not leave the station before midnight on February 5, they could not leave again without permission, that their children would be taken from them, and that their money would be confiscated.

PUBLICITY STUNT

The whole thing had been organised by one native as a “publicity stunt” for an organisation of which he was an official.

All the natives who had left had been terrified by his wild statements, and had not been able to reason them out for themselves.

This man had wired to many members of the New South Wales Parliament that the natives were starving, but that was nonsense.

In addition to rations, there was an allowance of 5/ a week for each child under 14 years, and some families received up to £3 a fortnight in various ways.

The only control of this by the station was that care was taken that the natives did not waste it. This was necessary, because few of the men could think properly for themselves.