

Labor Call, 24 October 1935, p. 10, The Aborigine, William Cooper, Honorary Secretary, Australian Aborigines' League, Letter to the Editor

The civilised aboriginal natives of Australia, together with those not so advantaged continue to suffer disabilities which affect them to a degree not appreciated by the white population. The harshness of these disabilities is emphasised when it is pointed out that people of any other race attain full citizenship with all rights arising from that citizenship, on their majority, if they are born in the Commonwealth, even though their parents are not naturalised. Such persons, in parallel circumstances with people of European descent, would receive old-age or invalid pensions, etc., but, no matter how cultured the dark person may be who is a native of Australia of aboriginal descent, if, in cases of mixed blood, the blood fusion is more than 60 per cent aboriginal, he may not receive these considerations. If, after a life in independence and culture, he falls on evil days, or is, by sickness and infirmity, unable to continue to earn his living, he must return to the aboriginal station there to receive rations of food and clothing on a scale designed to meet the needs of the uncultured, a condition which can quite be appreciated as being repugnant nor is this the worst. Recently we had a case of one of our community who had lived from girlhood in independence, and who was a worthy member of the community over the years since. Becoming ill, she made application for the invalid pension, but was refused because, it was affirmed, she was more than half aboriginal. That same woman was held to be ineligible for State assistance because she was more than half white. Between the conflicting administration of Federal and State spheres this woman was refused any assistance from the time of her first becoming ill till her death some time later. We do not want to have the purpose of this letter "red-herringed", and do not stress this case, typical as it is of other cases that may occur at any time, but we hold the papers from both Federal and State Authorities bearing out these statements. The trouble is that the restrictions on the aboriginal were evolved in the early days of the clash of the races, no provision being made for the advance of the dark people toward the culture of the West. The harshness of our disabilities brings us to realise that the dice is always loaded against the dark man. Because this is so, and because we are sure that it is neither the will of the white population or the authorities that it should be so, we feel that we must bring our condition to the notice of the public, asking from the white man a fair deal. We have had the advantage of education and culture for some generations, but we never, forget that we are brothers to the dark man who has not had our advantages, of the dark man who is advancing by the same road we have trodden. We never dissociate ourselves from the dark man, whether he be in the primitive condition or in contact with civilisation without being civilised. We are not seeking for any advantage for any class of aboriginal but for the race, and for every member of it, no matter what the stage of his progress. We desire to help in the advance of all the dark people to the culture of the European.

With this as our ideal, we have organised a League, the aim of which is to present our appeal to the white population. We have a programme by which we feel the progress of the race can be facilitated, and this programme is advanced in the confidence that it will receive due attention.

The dark folk are generally, if not invariably, poor. They are little able to finance the organisation necessary to bring their disabilities to the notice of their friends. It is for this reason I am writing. We know the sympathy with and interest in the dark man as

we know of the British love of a square deal for nil. We must express our case, but we lack the financial ability. We therefore appeal to the lovers of the dark race to help in whatever way is possible. Our organisation is nonpolitical and non-sectarian. We feel, therefore, that we can approach every section of the community. Of our bona-fides we feel that you will have no misgiving when you know that all monies contributed are in the care of one of the most respected, as well as one of the most popular men in Melbourne, Doug Nicholls, the Fitzroy footballer. You know Doug, as a man and a sport I am personally proud of him as a nephew, and the dark race is proud of him as a worthy representative.

Any amount, great or small, will be welcome, and every penny contributed will be spent in things necessary to our propaganda. Doug's address is 12 Claude Street, Northcote. Write to him in regard to financial matters, and to me in matters general. We suggest a practical way for some organisations to help would be to organise concerts, in which case we will be ready to supply aboriginal artists. Whatever is done we would ask to be done soon. "He gives twice who gives quickly."

We have a definite programme by which we fool the race can be uplifted. We have also plans for the presentation of our case to the public. Already we have had several concerts, including one broadcast by the management of 3DB. This broadcasting station also granted us the privilege of broadcast by Doug Nicholls on the matter of the solution of the aboriginal problem seen by the dark race themselves. The courtesy of 3DB has earned the grateful thanks of the Dark Folk.

Our campaign must be sustained and persistent, and will involve much expense. This expense will be minimised and used only for the necessary expenditure, all service being given in an honorary capacity Monies entrusted to us will be jealously guarded and carefully spent.

White Brothers! We have not had a fair go have we? We are seeking your help merely that an old wrong may be righted. We are only asking you to remedy a wrong toward the dark man by the white. Help us to attain our ideal and you will never regret it. At best we can only remain a small people within a large one, and we aim that that minority shall be one you will be proud of. It is accepted that the aboriginal race is an offshoot of the great Indo-European race. Actually the dark man belongs to the white race, and is therefore kin to you. We ask your help that your blood brothers may be raised to a state self-reliance. Give the dark man a chance and he win prove his worth. Our appeal to you. To whom else can we go? To whom else, indeed, should we go? Shall our appeal be in vain? We know it will not.