

Australian Aborigines' League Annual Report for 1936, New South Wales Archives and Records, NRS 12060, Item No. [12/8749-8750]

Dear Fellow Members of the Dark Race

It is with mixed feelings that I report for the year. At times I get very discouraged at the slow progress of our cause and at other times the evidence of improvement heartens me. The fact is that there is continued improvement all the time of late years, but the rate of progress is too slow. At the moment, the Star of our Hope is in the ascendant. We have suffered enough, God knows, but surely the day of our deliverance is drawing nigh. I hope to live to see it. It is sad to think that all our miseries were uncalled for and that the intolerance of our position should be allowed to continue for a moment. It is wicked that a baptism of blood has been the portion of a people who have never given any provocation. Our friends among the white race are growing in numbers and interest, though we are often sorry to note that some of these regard us as inferior clay. We want equality. We are dark complexioned and we do not wish to be otherwise. It is not too much to ask for the recognition of our full humanity and the right of full uplift for every member of our race. Our work is a goodwill one. Any complaints we have to make we do make, and we do not compromise in respect of our just claims. We are most temperate in our submissions and we must say that, generally speaking, our correspondence is received with good spirit. With but little exception, the official and departmental attitude to us is considerate and we appreciate this and are pleased to set it on record.

The year has been a busy one. Every movement affecting our interests is watched carefully and due representations made when necessary. A programme of advance is kept before the authorities, and, as a result, correspondence is very heavy. Letters are received from every State and from England.

DEATH OF KING GEORGE V

The condolence of the league in the death of His Majesty, King George V, was sent to His Majesty King Edward VIII, Queen Mary, and the Royal Family. This was presented through the Governor General and duly acknowledged by the Private Secretary to the King, Lord Wigram, on behalf of His Majesty.

PETITION TO THE KING

The Aboriginal race looks on His Majesty as their Protector. 2000 natives, from all over Australia, have signed a petition to the King praying for the Royal intervention to prevent the extinction of the race, the giving of better conditions to its members and for parliamentary representation by one of our race, if possible, failing that, by a sympathetic white man of our choice. The petition is ready for dispatch but is being held pending the finalisation of the consideration of the aboriginal matters submitted to the Premiers' Conference recently held in Adelaide.

COPRA AND COTTON

Reading in the press of a proposal to inaugurate the growing of cotton and copra by aboriginals on their reserves in the Commonwealth Territory, a letter was sent asking

for details, commending the principle which we want to operate on every aboriginal reserve. A reply was received that the details of the scheme were not yet finalised but that the Minister was considering a number of proposals for the advantage of aboriginals in the Territory.

COUNCIL OF AMELIORATIVE BODIES IN VICTORIA

Feeling that the number of small bodies advocating the cause of the aborigines should be for the benefit of our race, a meeting was convened of all ameliorative bodies with a view to coordinating all activities. There are strong bodies in most of the state and with Victoria in line the interests of our race will be in capable hands. Early finalisation of the matter is hoped for.

AFFILIATION WITH PEACE COUNCIL

During the year the Executive of the League agreed to affiliate with the United Peace Council.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR HALF CASTES, NORTHERN TERRITORY

Noting by the press that consideration was to be given to certain half-castes in that restrictions now applying to them as aboriginals would be removed, I wrote to the Minister for the Interior suggesting that any concession made to half-castes should also be made to approved full bloods. I urged that there should not be any distinction between the treatment of half-castes and full bloods, pointing out that latter is equally capable of full culture up to the standard of the white race. In reply I was notified that it was not intended, at this juncture, to grant the concessions in full bloods. We should nail out colours to the mast in respect of this matter making our slogan "Full equality for the dark race with the white race, and no differentiation between the full blood and those of mixed blood".

DEVELOPMENT OF ABORIGINAL LANDS, NEW SOUTH WALES

I wrote to the Acting Premier of New South Wales in the matter of the development of aboriginal lands in that State, pointing out that it was not right that these lands should be neglected and that their development by the dark people would improve the status of the people, give them an assured income besides cheapening the cost of aboriginal administration. A suggestion was made for an experiment to be made first at Cumeroogunga, and in the light of the success there the question of other reserves to be considered. Cumeroogunja was suggested because of its ideal situation with large areas of fertile soil, easily irrigable and with abundance of water. I suggested experimental plots of oranges, tomatoes, vines, tobacco and lucerne. It is regretted that a reply had not been received to this communication.

ABORIGINAL CORROBOREE, DARWIN

Attention being drawn to undesirable features in connection with a corroboree at Darwin, which was organized for the amusement of American tourists, I wrote in protest. It was represented that the Darwin natives were not considered suitable to

secure realistic enactment and so uncivilised natives were brought in. The corroboree was made so realistic that many white people were afraid of the outcome. It was said that the corroboree revived features long forgotten in Darwin, resulting in trouble. My protest was against the exploitation of natives for the amusement of tourists.

The Minister for the Interior replied that the report was inaccurate and exaggerated; that the Administration would not countenance any commercialisation of the aboriginal corroborees; that it is in accord with our sentiments for the preservation of the native culture and ceremonial, only with the elimination of undesirable features.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ABORIGINAL CHILDREN, BARMAH

My attention being drawn to the treatment of colored children at Barmah State School, Victoria, by the Head Master, representations were made to the Minister in the matter.

Acknowledgement was made but the matter is yet to be finalised.

PREMIERS' CONFERENCE, ADELAIDE

Promise[s] having been made that the question of aboriginal administration would be discussed at the Premiers' Conference I wrote advocating,

1. The Federalisation of aboriginal control, enabling a uniform policy for the whole of Australia.
2. In this event, we desired representation for the aboriginals in the Federal Legislature
3. Failing Federal control, we asked for a common policy, under Federal influence, and subsidising of the States by the Federal Parliament.
4. In this latter event parliamentary representation was sought in each legislature, particularly Western Australia and other States where the aboriginal population is numerous.

Arising from the Premiers' Conference it was decided that the different conditions in each State were against the Federalisation of aboriginal administration but it was arranged that there should be from time to time a conference of Chief Protectors and Experts. The first of these Conferences is scheduled for the New Year and we are waiting the result for from that will be determined what our future action will be.

SUSTENANCE FOR NATIVES, NEW SOUTH WALES

The matter of sustenance for natives in New South Wales was taken up and the following requests were made:—

1. Payment of sustenance on the basis applying to white persons who are unemployed instead of a ration which is inadequate and unsuitable, meanwhile.

2. Rations to be issued to all unemployed natives.

A somewhat evasive answer was received but it is hoped that the matter can be taken up by deputation on some occasion when the Premier, Mr Stevens, is in Melbourne.

REQUEST FOR A DEPUTATION TO THE PREMIER OF N.S.W.

In February last I wrote to Mr Stevens, Premier of N.S.W., asking that he receive a deputation, at some time when he is Melbourne, in respect of the following matters:—

1. Full citizenship rights to all aboriginals whether living on a settlement or not. This to include payment of sustenance, as to whites, for unemployed natives.
2. That no dark person be expelled from a settlement without an enquiry, at which legal assistance would be allowed to the native.
3. That lands occupied by aboriginals be developed by them, suitable instruction and necessary equipment being made available for the purpose. When men are adequately trained opportunity to be given for dark men to settle land for working for their own profit.
4. That aboriginal schools be raised to the standard of white schools.
5. Parliamentary representation to be allowed to aboriginals in the same way the Maoris in New Zealand have representation.

To this memorandum no reply has yet been received, possibly due to the absence of the Premier overseas. The matter has been taken up again.

APPOINTMENT OF WOMEN PROTECTORS

One of the most necessary reforms is the need for the appointment of women protectors in the remote parts of Australia. While the present practice of travelling dark women, either on charges or as witnesses, some distance to Police Courts, continues, the travelling in charge of male police officers should be discontinued in favor of travelling with women protectors. This League supports the agitation with this end in view.

A. P. BOARD, VICTORIA

When the late Mrs Bon died, the League nominated Mr Burdeu for the vacancy on the Board. A reply was received that if it is decided to make an appointment in place of Mrs Bon, the representations of this League will receive careful consideration.

EDUCATION OF NATIVES

The matter of the education of aboriginals has been kept well to the front. Liberty certainly follows education. We natives know the value of education and ask that all natives have the same opportunity to qualify as white people have. Our enemies know the value education would be to us for one said recently that he objected to the native

being educated as he will not then die out. We claim the same right as other colored people have for our smart children to be able to qualify as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and nurses.

CONCLUSION

Our League is organised. Its work is known throughout the Commonwealth and in England. Everyone admits our disabilities and most people wish us well in our advocacy of our rights. We should endeavour to extend our ranks for our income is not sufficient to carry out the necessary work. This is Our Movement. We must support and use it.

May the new year of service be fraught with even better success than this year and may the day soon come when we will have achieved our ideal: "Full equality for the dark race with the white race and full uplift for every member of the race."

Statement of Receipts and Disbursements for the year 1935-1936

Receipts

		£.	s.	d.
Balance brought forward		3	0	0
Life membership subscriptions —				
	Miss Baillie	£1	0	0
	Mr L. Luscombe	1	0	0
	Mr T. R. Rofe	1	0	0
			3	0
Membership subscriptions			2	7
Donation, Mrs Tennant-Cooke			5	0
Concerts — Panton Hill		4	1	0
	Essendon		3	0
	South Melbourne (Benefit)	16	1	9
Savings Bank Interest				3
		£31	15	0

Disbursements

Hire of hall (three occasions) for meetings	19	6
Postage, phone calls, etc	1	10
Hire of Concert Hall, Panton Hill	12	6

Bus hire, Panton Hill	1-15-0
Advertising, Panton Hill	1-13-6
Artists' fares to Essendon	5-0
Concert dresses	17-6
South Melbourne Benefit Concert (net proceeds)	14-7-0
(expenses)	1-14-9
Secretary's travelling expenses	3-0-0
	26-14-9
Bank balance	5-0-3
	31-15-0

Audited and found correct
E. Dredge
Auditor