

Natives are People

Australia's aborigines should be treated as human beings, not as pets or freaks, the Minister for Territories, Mr. P. M. C. Hasluck, said in Sydney one day recently.

Nothing should be done to impair their dignity or self-respect.

Mr. Hasluck was giving a National Aborigines Day address at the Methodist Lyceum Hall.

"When we try to repair our neglect of the aboriginal people, we have to be careful that we do not fuss over them in the wrong way," he said.

"There is a very strong tendency by some of those who deeply sympathise with them to treat the aborigines as though they were pets.

"Personally, I always feel rather affronted on behalf of the poor little koala at the way in which his dignity as an animal is insulted by being cuddled by chattering, two-legged strangers who can neither climb trees nor eat gumleaves.

False to Say Neglected

"Aborigines are not pets: they are human beings, men and women."

Mr. Hasluck said it was false to say in broad terms that aborigines were neglected.

Such statements overlooked the devoted work of hundreds of missionaries on scores of missions supported by the Australian Churches.

The statements also overlooked provisions made by Governments in the Northern Territory and most States for native welfare.

"There are about 500 Government servants and over 600 mission workers engaged as full-time workers in helping the aborigines," he said.

"That is one white Australian working full-time for every 70 aborigines, either full-blood or mixed-blood.

"The scale of effort has risen greatly over recent years."

Most faults in welfare work among primitive aborigines were likely to be found in too great a haste to bring about a transformation.

The greatest neglect of aborigines today occurred among the "fringe-dwellers"—people who lived on the fringes of Australian towns.

"Not one of you can have a clear conscience so long as there is a single fringe-dweller in your district who lives like an outcast," he added.

Rotary Honours Aborigine

GUEST SPEAKER AT DINNER

A Burnt Bridge Aboriginal, Mr. Andrew Pacey, one Monday night recently, established a precedent by becoming the first person of Aboriginal descent to attend a meeting of the Kempsey Rotary Club as guest speaker.

Mr. Pacey is also the first aboriginal resident of the Macleay ever to attend a Rotary Club function.

His invitation marked Rotary acknowledgment of National Aborigines Day, celebrated the Friday previously.

Two youths from the Kinchela Boys' Home, Alex Thompson and Gerald Ellis, were also guests of the club.

Appealing for tolerance, Mr. Pacey said that efforts by whites to re-establish his people must eventually be fruitful.

"I have been working on the railways for 13 years and during that time I have been stationed in a good number of towns in N.S.W.

"I have been in towns where I was not allowed to have meals in cafes: I was not allowed to have seats in picture theatres and where taxis would not pick me up on account of my colour.

"Therefore I can safely say that Kempsey is one of the best towns I have been to so far as aborigines are concerned."

Mr. Pacey instanced kindnesses shown to his people by the medical and nursing staff at Macleay District Hospital and said that he, too, had been given every assistance when such occasions arose.

"The white people on the Macleay River are really advanced in their thought that aborigine people are human beings after all," he said.

Mr. Pacey said it was unfortunate that there still existed a number of white people who regarded aborigines as a lost race.

"These people really don't know who or what aborigines are," he went on.

"If I could get my message to spread to every corner of the continent I would tell the white people to give us people of aboriginal blood a fair go. By doing that, they will not only be doing us a good turn, but also doing themselves a good turn by showing their neighbours just what is inside their hearts and what goes on in their minds."

Mr. Pacey continued: "I would also send this message to the Aborigines of Australia: do not let the white man have his own way by doing all this good work for us. Let us ourselves work hard and persevere, thus helping the white man to help us."

Mr. Pacey told Rotarians that their invitation had given him a memorable evening.

He appreciated most of all their kind and generous thoughts towards aborigines everywhere.

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