

NATIONAL ABORIGINES DAY OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE

New South Wales Annual Report for 1961

Talent Quest.—The demonstration in Martin Place, Sydney, which has become an annual event was organised on the same lines as last year. To provide artists for the programme, it was decided to organise a talent quest amongst the aborigines. This would also show the rest of the community the talent of these people, who we hoped would be encouraged by the opportunity of being brought to Sydney. This quest was difficult to organise as nothing like it had ever been attempted before. For this year it was decided to confine it to N.S.W. Depending on its success and on experience gained, a decision will be made as to whether or not the talent quest becomes Australia-wide in 1962. Mrs. L. H. Cocks consented to take charge of the organisation and was given a free hand. She approached the Commercial Broadcasting Association, who agreed to help wherever possible, but explained that without a sponsor, nothing could be done on a very large scale. However, all country radio stations co-operated in the making of tape recordings of contestants and sending tapes to Sydney for judging. Aborigines Welfare Board stations were contacted and Church Missions and other associations interested in aborigines welfare were all asked to publicise the quest. The Australian Broadcasting Commission was asked to allow Mr. John Antill to judge entries. The Christian Broadcasting Association assisted with the difficult task of editing the tapes. The winner of the quest was Mr. Charles Edwards of Purfleet, the Aborigines Welfare Board station near Taree. It was decided to bring twelve others down to Sydney for the celebrations. Airlines of N.S.W. were requested to provide air transport for contestants coming from towns where there is an air service. The Aborigines Welfare Board provided rail tickets for others. It was hoped that a sponsor could have been found, but this could not be done. There was no guarantee that there would be any entrants. Mrs. Cocks had a formidable task and achieved remarkable success. It is hoped that next year there will be much more co-operation from the welfare and assimilation associations in country towns and that they will be prepared to seek out local talent, encouraging coloured people to enter the quest, and helping them to get to Sydney when the time comes. This should stimulate interest in the local aborigines and in this matter some good publicity could be given in the local papers.

The visit of the talent quest finalists to Sydney was very much "in the news". In fact, the best publicity received in connection with the celebrations was through the talent quest. Finalists were featured on radio

and T.V., and Mrs. Cocks was interviewed on commercial and national radio and T.V. Some members of the N.S.W. committee were able to offer accommodation to the visitors and we are indebted to members of the Central Methodist Mission who agreed to look after some of the young people.

It is felt that with the experience gained and if an absolute deadline date in February is set for entries to be in Sydney, it will be possible to develop this quest into something of real value to the coloured people. It will provide interesting stories for publicity and will ensure that National Aborigines Day makes a real impact on the people of this State.

Quest for Writing Talent.—This Australia-wide quest was conducted again this year. Mrs. E. Speight again organised this and received entries from many parts of Australia.

Art Competition.—Rev. A. Grant agreed to organise an art competition this year, as we hoped to encourage all talented aborigines, the emphasis for this year's observance being on success stories. About 60 entries were received. A great deal of help was given by Mr. R. Batterbee, who showed genuine interest in the idea. Paintings were all sent to Sydney, unframed, and Mr. Eric Langker undertook the judging. Mr. Grant arranged a most attractive exhibition in the House of Wales Gallery and it was opened on National Aborigines Day at 4.15 p.m. Mr. Langker in his most interesting opening address pointed out the definite pattern and colour values to be seen in the traditional paintings and how this is carried over into the Western style paintings. He urged aborigines to preserve these characteristics.

Martin Place Ceremony.—This demonstration was attended by His Excellency the Governor of N.S.W., and in the absence of the Lord Mayor of Sydney, the Deputy Lord Mayor presided. The Premier of N.S.W. was represented by Mr. C. A. Kelly, the Chief Secretary. The Ven. Archdeacon G. R. Delbridge, Chairman of the N.S.W. Committee, welcomed those assembled. Secondary school students from the Matraville Co-Educational High School provided a Guard of Honour for His Excellency, and aboriginal children from Kellyville were special guests. The choir from the A.I.M. Bible Training College at Singleton sang and items were given by talent quest finalists. The Sydney Police Band was also in attendance. Mrs. Margaret Morris of Kempsey and Mr. R. Saunders spoke on behalf of the aboriginal people. Mrs. Morris urged the aborigines