

From

"AGE"

12 DEC 1958 Melbourne, Vic.

Aborigines as Free Citizens

SIR,—THE ASSISTING in the defence of Albert Namatjira and the providing of opportunity to four other full-blood aborigines to show they are free citizens, has been undertaken by the Aborigines' Advancement League, Victoria.

Enos and Keith Namatjira, Claude Emitja and Otto Pareroutja have requested that it be shown that they are free citizens and not "wards of the State," subject to the Northern Territory Welfare Ordinance. For this purpose the services of Mr. M. Ashkanasy, Q.C., Professor Zeiman Cowen and Mr. N. Stephen have been gained as counsel.

We believe there are many Victorians who agree with the A.A.L. that aborigines should not be subject to an ordinance which deprives them of basic human rights. (Under the Ordinance the authorities can move them to any part of the Territory without their consent, imprison without appeal, take over their property, &c.)

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." It must be as free citizens that governments must seek their integration with other Australians—not by making them inferior serfs.

A defence fund for aborigines has been started to meet the legal expenses of the proceedings. Trustees are being obtained.

STAN DAVEY (Secretary, Aborigines Advancement League, Victoria).

● 'Smokescreen'

THE liquor regulations are only a smoke-screen.

An aboriginal who was a total abstainer still could not get a bed in the hotels or guest houses, attend the pictures in Darwin except on special nights and in segregated seats, travel first-class on the train from Adelaide to Alice Springs or go into the dining car.

He could not rent a house among the white people, and most important of all, he could not earn enough money to keep his family in even the most modest scale of decent living because wages paid to wards of the State are about 10 to 15 per cent. of those paid to a white worker for the same work.

Let us have less of this Early-Victorian type of moralising about the evils of alcohol for aboriginals, and more clear thinking about the social evils behind the situation.

—SHIRLEY ANDREWS,
Hon. Secretary
Council for Aboriginal Rights
(Victoria).

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