Why Retain Lake Tyers?

SIR,—IN EXPRESSING our appreciation of Dr. Donald Thomson’s public statement, “The Age,” that aboriginal people have known how to maintain a primitive level of living, I may give some illustrations from my own experience. The phrase means a great deal to me.

Whenever possible I return to my home at Cumminggtona, on the Murray. Like the people of Lake Tyers, we, too, wished to develop our land. We visited the site and walked across the settlement area. It was overgrown with trees. The first settlers described the land as fertile. I remember the pride they had in the fields of grain and potatoes. We had the same pride.

Many families owned their own horses and dogs. We saw the activities of horse riding, fishing, and hunting. Our church and school were nearby.

Gradually the N.S.W. Government helped us. We were independent and self-respecting. We learned to farm. White neighbors were allowed to lease sections of the reserve. We were happy and prosperous. Many families were not allowed to farm and were sent to government institutions.

We were disappointed and depressed. As the station commenced to break up the community, the government officers said they were too lazy and irresponsible.

Destroyed

It was the Government’s policy and had administered destruction. Many families refused to live under the system and attempted to make life better. However, they were isolated. Descendants of these folk walk the streets, live on the fringes of society, and work on the banks of the Murray. Other families who put up a fight were offered homes in the nearest country town, but they were often left without the education and assistance of a better standard of education.

The three families who accepted the offer found how many people were treated as aboriginal laborers in white society, in spite of assistance. Instead, they became demoralised and disintegrated. Their children were put in government institutions.

In this I have seen and heard how Lake Tyers families were prevented from happening to the Lake Tyers families. For Lake Tyers as a basis for a scheme of employment through community development, it was a humane plan which can offer security, shelter, and other amenities.

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