ABORIGINES BOARD TO OUST RESIDENTS

On the 24th of November, 1964, the Aborigines' Welfare Board determined: "that the Settlement (Lake Tyers) should eventually be closed". Some members urged "that a firm date should be set for the closing of the Settlement and adhered to".

COMPLETE DISPOSSESSION

NO PART OF THE RICH PRODUCTIVE STATE OF VICTORIA IS TO BE LEFT IN THE HANDS OF THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS.

In 1874, 24,692 acres were held as reservations for Aborigines. Under the pretext of "assimilation", the alleged "isolation" of the various communities, their "laziness", etc., all but 4,500 acres of these valuable pieces of real estate have been stripped from the Aborigines and placed in the hands of white farmers.

Today the Welfare Board is relentlessly working to plunder 4,000 of these remaining acres.

OUR SILENCE CONDONES THIS ACTION.

THE PROMISES

As with other Victorian Reserves, the final eviction of the people has been preceded by Government words of assurance.
**ABORIGINAL PLEAS FOR LAKE TYSERS**

January, 1952.

(Statement by MR. LAURIE MOFFATT, a senior resident of Lake Tyers, published in “The Age”.)

“We do not want to see Lake Tyers finally sold to the white men in the same way as Ramahyuck, Condah, Ebbenezer, Corranderk Reserves have been sold. All these have been hostels for the Aborigines in my lifetime and have been sold to the white men to cultivate.”

January, 1956.

(The following extracts are taken from a letter written by MR. CLIFFORD PEPPER, a past resident of Lake Tyers. It was supported by seven other persons.)

“We understand that this visit by Government Members to Lake Tyers Aboriginal Reserve is to determine the usefulness of retaining the reserve for the improvement of the conditions of the descendents of Aboriginal people.

“The retention of the reserve has been blamed for making our people lazy. If some do not make the effort, we believe it is because of the way the ‘Board for the Protection of Aborigines’ has from the first administered the reserves.

“. . . the Board’s policy has been a dismal failure and we think it is now time to prevent further suffering and confusion.

“We could support ourselves by growing maize, peas, beans, potatoes, etc., by timber milling and poultry farming.

“WE FEEL SURE THAT YOU WILL APPROVE OUR INTENTION TO TRY TO WORK THIS WAY ON LAKE TYSERS.”

April, 1963.

(The following petition was signed by 60 adults.)

“The undersigned residents of Lake Tyers have NO wish to move off Lake Tyers Reserve and we ask the State Government of Victoria to retain it, and the land to be used in the best interest as we think fit.”

**STRONG ATTACHMENTS**

The 1959 Welfare Board report fully recognised the strong links the Aboriginal people have with Lake Tyers.

“It is . . . the birthplace of a very large percentage of the Gippsland Aboriginal population and THEY LOOK UPON IT AS THEIR ORIGINAL HOME. Many outside the Station have relatives living in it and to them it has strong sentimental attachment.”

**READY RESPONSE TO ASSISTANCE**

During 1960, prior to the stiffening of the Board’s determination to close the reserve, certain improvements were made to the settlement, bringing an immediate response from the people.

“A programme of maintenance and renovation of the Aborigines’ cottages has been continued . . . Residents have responded very well to the freshly painted cottages and are showing their appreciation in the way they are caring for them.” (A.W.B. 1960 Report.)

**NOT PREPARED FOR ASSIMILATION**

The same report admitted, “The residents are in most instances not equipped to meet the demands of the wider community, and have not been prepared to make their way in the outside world”.

NO TRAINING HAS BEEN GIVEN SINCE JUNE, 1960, BUT THE PEOPLE ARE NOW BEING COERCED TO LEAVE.
FAILURE OF REHOUSING SCHEME
ABORIGINES DISTRESSED AND HUMILIATED

Thirteen families have been rehoused off Lake Tyers.
Three families have been permitted to return.
Five other families have made application to return
and have been refused. Some have left their new homes
and now “double up” with relatives and friends.

Two families have been subject to petitions by white
neighbours because of their failure to maintain required
hygienic standards.

These families have been distressed and humiliated.
Past policies of the Board have failed to equip them to
handle town-housing, budgeting, employment, social
situations, etc. Against their desires they have been
coerced into launching out into white society with dire
consequences for each family.

BOARD BLINDNESS

In spite of the above situation the Board’s minutes of
24/11/64 record, “It was stated that Board policy had
been largely successful and only comparatively few
families had failed”.

NO sociological survey had been made of the families
concerned.

POLICY OPPOSED BY PROFESSIONAL ADVISORS

The only professionally competent members of the
Board, Professor D. F. Thomson and Dr. J. Finney
(untill her resignation November, 1964) completely
rejected the policy of the Board.

The State Superintendent, Mr. P. E. Felton, the Board's
qualified senior executive officer, reported 14/8/64,
“Existing policies tend to push young couples off the
station, so that they marry, and attempt to raise families
under sub-standard conditions, unfitted for respon-
sibility”.

He advised that the Board “Retain Lake Tyers Reserve
with the eventual aim of it becoming an open village”.

This warning and advice have been rejected.

LAKE TYERS ABORIGINES ARE BEING OUSTED
BY DECISIONS OF PERSONS NOT EQUIPPED TO
MAKE SOCIOLOGICAL JUDGEMENTS.

Where does the Government stand in this matter?
THE BOARD'S LAKE TYERS POLICY IS BOTH
IMMORAL AND SOCIALY INCOMPETENT.

Please —

PROTEST by writing 1. to your local members of
Parliament; 2. to the Chief Secretary, the Hon.

ASSIST this last ditch campaign by forwarding the
attached slip with your offer of aid (typing,
duplicating, arranging meetings, etc) to:

LAKE TYERS FOR ABORIGINES COMMITTEE,
56 Cunningham Street, Northcote.

Assistance Slip for “Lake Tyers Committee”

Please find enclosed a sum of £………………
towards the Lake Tyers for the Aborigines campaign.
I will be pleased to assist the committee by:

1. …………………………………………………
2. …………………………………………………

Name. …………………………… Tel. No. ……………………………
Address …………………………………………

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