

COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL RIGHTS (VICTORIA)

Box 34, Northcote, Vic., Australia

August 27th, 1956

MS 2683/10/124

Lady Jessie Street,
704 The White House,
Albany St., London, N.W.1

Dear Madam,

The Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society has sent us a copy of their plan for approaching U.N.O on behalf of the Australian Aborigines. We are most interested in the idea, and have written expressing our full support and co-operation.

We understand that you are interested in this project and have considered coming out to Australia to set up a Federal body to deal with the approach to U.N.O. My committee have asked me to write to you conveying our enthusiasm and support for this idea. We have long felt the need for a Federal organisation, and it would be a good time to get one started now as the general interest in the Aborigines has been growing steadily in the last few years.

Two of the most active of the organisations concerned with Aboriginal affairs are affiliated with this organisation, namely The Aborigines Advancement League in Sth. Australia (President, Dr. C. Duguid), and the Native Welfare Association in W.A. We also have good contacts with the Australian-Aborigines Fellowship League of N.S.W. This organisation has recently been revived in N.S.W. and has very good trade union and Labour Party support. Both these later bodies ^{the trade unions & Labour Party} are showing increasing activity in support of better conditions for Aborigines, and in both many people seem to be conscious of the fact that it has been one of their weak spots in the past.

Unfortunately, some of the older organisations interested in Aborigines have proved themselves rather unco-operative. Many of them have concentrated on charitable work, and have a more patronising approach based on the conception of "uplifting" the Aborigines rather than seeing them as an oppressed people. Consequently such people tend to oppose any strong action on behalf of the Aborigines, and frequently label it "Communist inspired". We have also found that some of these people tend to regard the Aborigines as their speciality and themselves as experts and bitterly resent any new organisations being set up, or any new forms of action being taken.

It would be of great value in getting general support to have an Australia-wide body to handle the U.N.O. approach because many people who heartily agree that the matter should go to U.N.O. are a little unwilling for it to be raised by an organisation outside Australia. Also, the general ignorance here about the nature of the Anti-Slavery Society rather confuses the picture for many who were inclined to say indignantly "But our Aborigines are not Slaves" when the Society's plan was mentioned in our papers here. I do not share these views myself, and consider that the matter could be just as effectively raised by an organisation overseas. We are certainly prepared to support this idea, and help the Anti-Slavery Society in any way possible. We would also be most keen to see a Federal organisation set up to fight for justice for the Aborigines, and would be pleased to offer our assistance in this matter.

We would be glad to hear from you as to whether your plans have progressed any further, and to whether there is anything we can do to assist you at this stage.

With best wishes,

Yours faithfully,

Shirley Andrews

Hon. Sec.