

250,000 Signatures to be Sought on Native-Rights Petition

THE Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement hopes to collect 250,000 signatures for a petition, to be submitted at the opening session of Federal Parliament next year, calling for improved rights for aborigines.

The Victorian campaign will be opened at a public meeting in the Memorial Hall at the Y.W.C.A. on Monday, October 15.

The petition calls for the amendment of two clauses of the Commonwealth Constitution.

One clause gives Parliament the right to make laws for the "peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to the people of any race, other than the aboriginal race of any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws."

The petition will request the removal of the words exempting aborigines from the provision.

The other clause states that aborigines shall not be counted "in reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth or a State."

The council claims the clauses give support to other laws and regulations depriving aborigines of equal wages and employment opportunities and denying them the right to own and develop their remaining tribal grounds.

"Inferior"

It also claims that natives have inferior legal status to other Commonwealth citizens, and that the two clauses limit their right to "peace, order and good government."

This will be the second attempt the council has made for improved rights for aborigines. Mr. Stan Davey, general secretary of the Federal council, said the council, shortly after its for-

mation in 1958, received 30,000 signatures for a petition.

However, this was the first time the aborigines had been sufficiently well organised to get behind the move themselves, he said.

Aboriginal leaders from every State would speak at the Sydney meeting. Representatives from Brisbane, Perth, Darwin and Cairns will come to the Melbourne meeting.

Mr. Davey said the main

speaker in Melbourne would be Mrs. Kath Walker, Queensland secretary of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement. The Melbourne campaign committee of eight includes Mr. Gordon Bryant, Federal member for Wills, and Pastor Doug Nicholls.

The main lines of attack in the campaign would include the trade unions and church bodies.

Petition forms would be returned on February 28.