

Farming for Aborigines

SIR, — IT IS TO BE hoped the survey of the Department of Agriculture, announced in "The Age" (11/5) will take into account the human as well as the purely agricultural aspects of Lake Tyers.

These 4000 acres are regarded by the aboriginal people as their last remaining holding in a State which was once entirely theirs, and was taken from them without any compensation whatever.

To many of Victoria's aboriginal folk Lake Tyers is "home," where they have their roots and a feeling of belonging to a community.

Such a feeling they do not usually have, when they are dotted about the white community by a "benevolent" Government policy. This policy of assimilation requires them to lose their identity as a people (though most of them have expressly stated that they do not wish to do this)—in short, to die out. In fact, when aborigines go to live in country towns, they are all too frequently looked on as inferior or, at best, different.

We have always told our aboriginal people what we think is best for them. Now, for almost the first time, they are telling us what they want for themselves and their families.

Surely for once we can accede to their modest request and turn Lake Tyers into a productive co-operative farm, where aborigines who wish can be trained in farming skills, which will stand them in good stead when and if they move out (of their own free will) into the white community.

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