

Aboriginal conf'ce exposes shocking exploitation in Qld.

CAIRNS: The shocking exploitation of Aboriginal workers in Queensland was exposed at a conference held here early last month.

THE conference was called by the Cairns Branch of the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders' Advancement League.

Among those in attendance were Mr. G. Bryant, MHR, Mr. W. Fulton, MLA, representatives from the Communist Party, the Queensland, Townsville and Cairns Labor Councils, and Advancement organisations in other States.

The conference heard Aboriginal speakers give graphic reports of the exploitation and robbery of their people. Some of the examples included:

An Aboriginal stockman who had worked on a Peninsula station for 15 years and received no regular wages—only an occasional handout of some £4 or £5 from the Department of Native Affairs.

Another Aboriginal stockman, thrown by a horse at work and hospitalised for seven weeks. He had received no Workers' Compensation only a single dole of £1 from the DNA.

"Protection"

Even at the discriminatory rate of £10 weekly for colored stockmen controlled by the "Protection" Act (the rate for exempted stockmen is £18 weekly) and the even lower rate of earlier years, each of these men had earned about £3000 in wages in the last six or seven years alone.

Nearly all this sum had been paid into the DNA under the provisions of the "Protection" Act.

Yet neither worker had any bank book, any receipts, or any inkling of how much money now stood to his credit.

An Aboriginal woman speaker revealed how, not many years ago, she had been sent driving by the station boss at a wage of 12/6 weekly.

No pay at all

Thursday Island lugger men declared that, when "disciplined" by the DNA, they were drafted to certain luggers, for periods ranging from three months to two years, on no pay at all.

The conference demanded full award rates and conditions, as well as the right to workers' compensation and unemployment benefit, for Aborigines and Islanders, and that all wages be paid direct to them.

The demand for direct payment of wages and Social Service benefits "into our hands" was also made by one Aboriginal speaker after another at the conference.

The need for this was shown by many reports.

Robbed of endowment

One Aboriginal woman, the conference was told, applied for back payments of child endowment. She was sent a cheque for 10/- and a few pence.

The Cairns branch of the League advised her to refuse the cheque and then pressed her case with the authorities.

She then received a cheque for £108. The Queensland secretary of the League (Mrs. Kath Walker) described how Aborigines in the fringe settlement at Ravenshoe (North Queensland) had to drink creek water polluted by town waste.

On education, it was stated that the Queensland Education Act requires the establishment of a State School in any district where 11 (white) children need tuition, but the conference was told of districts in the Peninsula where groupings of more than 100 children had no schooling whatever.

A resolution adopted by conference demanded the immediate application

of all State Education Act standards and requirements to the education of all Aboriginal and Torres Island children, wherever they might be.

Call for aid

The Federal President of the Advancement League, Mr. J. McGinness, told the conference that the retention of Mapoon Mission for its Aboriginal inhabitants is "an immediate and urgent question."

Mapoon, he said, was ancestral land of the Aborigines and the Aboriginal

people there rightly regarded the land as their own.

They were "digging their toes in" and would fight doggedly against eviction, following the leasing of one-third of the Mapoon mission area to a foreign mining company.

He appealed to trade union and all other delegates to muster the widest possible support for the struggle to retain Mapoon for the Aboriginal people living there.

Visits to jail - but not to settlements

"The biggest prison in Australia — Pentridge — is in my electorate. It has regular visiting hours, when anybody can go there", Mr. Gordon Bryant, (Labor) Federal Member for Wills (Vic) told the Conference.

HE added: "But responsible officials of the Aborigines Advancement Leagues and even Federal Members of Parliament, like myself, are barred from entering Government settlements and missions in Queensland to inquire into conditions unless the Director of Native Affairs permits it. And he won't permit it."

Mr. Bryant was commenting on the Director's refusal to allow Mrs. K. Walker — State Secretary of the Aboriginal and Torres Islanders' Advancement League, to visit the Government settlement at Yarrabah near Cairns.

The Cairns branch of the League receives many complaints of conditions on Yarrabah.

Mrs. Walker told the Conference that, on her tour of Australia on behalf of her people, she had been allowed to visit settlements everywhere except in her home State—Queensland.

In Brisbane recently the Director of Native Affairs (Mr. C. O'Leary) refus-

ed to comment when questioned by the Courier Mail.

Mrs. M. Langford, Secretary of OPAL—a pro-Government assimilationist body, however, told the Courier Mail she thought the Department was wise in refusing Mrs. Walker permission to visit Yarrabah, as the Aboriginal Advancement League "would only stir up trouble there."

Trade Unionists and others who are becoming aware of the conditions under which Aboriginal people are held and dictated to on settlements and missions in Queensland, think it high time for the State Government to be compelled to face a lot of "trouble" over its disgraceful policies in relation to the oppressed national minorities in Queensland and the Torres Islands.

The action programme to be published by the Cairns League after its recent Conference should provide a firm basis for State-wide campaigning for human rights for these peoples.

Mr. A. James MHR in the USSR

Aust. MP favors exchanges

In an interview with Novosti Press Agency, an Australian parliamentarian, Mr. A. James MHR (Labor, Hunter NSW) stressed the importance of parliamentary exchanges between East and West.

MR. JAMES stayed in the Soviet Union at the invitation of the parliamentary group of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

"I am of the opinion that the exchange of MPs between the capitalist and socialist countries is very essential," he said.

"Let there be more people who could, from their personal impressions, form a correct opinion about some country and people.

"This will help us to do away with the cold war."

Advantages

As an example of the advantages for Australia in such exchanges, Mr. James, who represents a coal-mining area, cited the results of his inspection of the Soviet coal-mining industry.

"I talked with executives of the State Planning Committee (Gosplan) and they told me about the prospects of the coal industry in the USSR."

"In Australia there is a tendency towards reducing coal output. In the USSR this tendency is apparent

neither in the coal industry nor elsewhere."

"I should like my Labor colleagues to get acquainted with the solution of this problem in the USSR. Perhaps, they would come to the expediency of introducing in Australia something in the way of the Soviet seven-year plan."

"I am convinced that Soviet mines are using the most advanced methods of coal-winning.

"For example, I watched a hydraulic mining giant in operation. As far as I know, we have no such machines in Australia.

"In the Soviet Union much attention is paid to miners' safety and labour protection. I believe that workers' safety should always come first."

Mr. James commented on the friendly relationship between Soviet workers and managers.

"Obviously", he said, "there are two reasons for this.

"Firstly, Soviet engineers and directors are, in their mass, workers by birth. Secondly, the activity of the workers and the administration pur-

A woman says

A CHILD knocked at the door and brought his Christmas toy to show me.

It was a stereoscope with, amongst others, three reels of three dimensional colour pictures: "Inside Moscow" (I & II) and "Russia Today". Beautiful pictures. A very nice toy.

WOMEN say the apprenticeship system in Australia is archaic.

A new system of tertiary education should be devised for our youth, whereby they can be employed in the trade of their choice and carry on further study if they wish to, partly in their own time and partly in their employer's time up to a certain age.

Today, the children born in the peak year of births after the conclusion of World War II in 1945 are seeking jobs. Only a fraction will be able to secure apprenticeships.

The proposal to train older boys for metal trades will only solve a small part of the whole problem.

And what about the girls?

For one reason or another many of the teenagers not yet employed, are denied social service payments. Thus, the statistics of unemployed youth are inaccurate.

IN Italy, women now account for an average of one-third of all staffs in the distributive (saleswomen in shops, department stores and supermarkets) and this percentage is on the increase.

Industrial action is winning gains for women workers.

An agreement concluded on 22/7/61 reduced the working week of all shop workers in towns with a population over 30,000 from 54/60 hours to 48 hours. The workers also obtained two free half-days per month in addition to Sundays and public holidays without loss of pay.

The women are demanding equal pay and a further agreement made in 1961 provides for a reduction of the gap between male and female wages in three stages to reach 5% by 1st March 1963.

THE agenda of the 2nd International Trade Union Conference in problems of women workers set down for May 6-12 1963 in Bucharest, Rumania is as follows:

(1) The participation of women workers in the struggle of the trade unions for the implementation of the Programme of Action at the present stage adopted by

the 5th World Trade Union Congress and against the antisocial policy and discrimination by the capitalist monopolies with regard to female labor.

(2) The role and contribution of the women workers from colonial or newly independent countries to the struggle of the trade unions for the complete eradication of colonialism and for the conquest and extension of their rights.

(3) For large recruitment and organisation of women workers in trade unions, for their active participation in the life and direction of the unions.

IN the socialist countries, equality for women is effectively applied, while at the same time motherhood is honoured and protected.

In the U.S.S.R. 39% of highly skilled workers are women.

In Rumania 140,000 women hold trade union positions.

In Hungary women trade union officers make up 34% of the total.

AT the Fourth Trade Conference of the Trade Unions International of Metal and Engineering Industries (Trade Department of the W.F.T.U.), held in Berlin from October 1 to 6, 1962, a commission was convened with regard to female labour.

The commission revealed the need for the trade unions to carry out special activity with regard to women engineering workers.

The discussion confirmed the difficult conditions of women engineering workers in capitalist countries where they are among the most exploited sections.

The commission submitted to the Fourth Conference a programme containing the key demands of women workers on equal pay, access to trade training, protection of motherhood and social services.

A FEW dates for your 1963 diary:

Feb. 13: Welcome home lunch for Freda Brown returning from W.I.D.F. Council Meeting in Berlin.

Feb. 22: Gathering to launch tenth anniversary issue of Union of Australian Women journal, "Our Women."

Mar. 8: International Women's Day.

Mar. 16: Function to honour pioneers of I.W.D. Day.

Mar. 25/29: Equal Pay Week.

Apr. 20/21: Peace March, Sydney. (Solidarity with British Easter Aldermaston marchers.)

May 6/12: Second Conference of Women Workers called by the W.F.T.U. in Bucharest.

June 1: International Children's Day. Fifth W.I.D.F. Congress in Moscow.

Aug. 6: Hiroshima Day.

I RECEIVED a useful Christmas present, a mincer which does not have to be screwed down to operate. A small lever at the foot is turned and the mincer holds fast to any smooth surface, such as laminex, by suction.



OBITUARY

THE death of George Bowen occurred last week, December 24, 20 days after he had been seriously injured by a fall of coal at Mt. Kembla colliery.

He was a member of the Miners' Federation, and a member of the Communist Party for a number of years, during which he consistently sold the "Tribune" and raised finance for the Party.

There was a big attendance at his funeral, including representatives of most of the mines on the South Coast. Tributes were paid by the Vice-President of the Southern District Miners' Federation and Mr. Bill McDougall, District Secretary of the Communist Party.

"Tribune" extends its sympathy to his brother, Mr. Dave Bowen and his sisters, Phyl Delany and Mrs. I. Hennington.