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AN
APPEAL
TO
WORLD
OPINION



*The following letter has been sent to U Thant,
Secretary-General of the United Nations, from the
Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights.*

It speaks for itself:

10th September, 1966

"Dear U Thant,

"We appeal to you on behalf of our people, the Aborigines of the Northern Territory of Australia, under the clause of the United Nations Charter which says no people should be discriminated against because of their race or colour.

"We appeal to you to bring to the notice of the General Assembly the sad plight of the vast majority of our people and the discrimination and many injustices which they suffer, and to use your good offices with the Australian Federal Government to ask it to intervene to help us.

Tribal Lands Taken

"Our tribal lands have been taken from us and handed over to big pastoral companies, often foreign controlled, and to wealthy mining companies. We have received only inadequate compensation for this. However, compensation is not the point, our people want to have a say in controlling and working the land.

Hard, Dangerous Work for Miserable Pittance

"On the big cattle stations of the Territory our people work long hours doing skilled, hard and often dangerous work mustering, branding and injecting cattle for a miserable pittance of six dollars sixty-six cents a week. Even Federal Government concerns like the Army pay Aborigines in Darwin only ten to fourteen dollars and keep, which is only a fraction of the payment made to white men.

It Was Our Country

"This is happening in a country which is really ours and where even the poorest white man receives nearly forty dollars a week and usually lives in a comfortable home.

"Recently some of our people stopped work on the big Vestey's cattle station at Wave Hill and asked for better wages. Vestey's sacked the lot of them and it is possible they may try to drive them off their tribal lands.

We Live in Humpies

"Living conditions on the pastoral properties are shockingly bad. Most of our people live in humpies without even minimum hygiene facilities. Their diet consists of the poorest parts of the meat, tea, flour, sugar, just enough to keep body and soul together.

Our Children Lack Education

"In most cases our children do not receive a proper education and training for jobs. On the majority of cattle stations education is non-existent. In recent years hurried, make-shift attempts have been made by the Australian Government to disguise the true position which is revealed on investigation since all the youth and adult population on pastoral properties are absolutely illiterate. The special schools recently provided in some places do not measure up to the needs of the people. This leads to a position where the individual has no choice of employment.

Robbed of Social Services

"Many of us are robbed of part of our social service payments like pensions and child endowment in a disgraceful and illegal manner. Instead of being paid to the Aboriginal direct these payments go to the cattle station employers, Missions and Government Reserve authorities in a lump sum and we receive only a fraction of it in cash. Because the food, clothing and shelter provided for Aborigines at these places is inadequate they are actually making a profit from social service payments.

"The Australian Government bears a heavy responsibility for its failure to ensure that the Northern Territory Ordinances relating to social welfare and employment of Aborigines are observed on pastoral properties, Welfare Settlements, Missions and elsewhere.

True Equality Needed

"After years of degradation and inferiority we have been granted citizenship rights and the right to vote. But this equality is only on paper until we have equal pay for equal work, proper housing, education and training and some control at least over our sacred tribal areas.

"There is much more we could tell you and we can send you further facts on request and photographs of the terrible conditions under which most of our people live.

"We are fighting for our very existence as a people.

Please help us.

Yours in the name of humanity,

(Signed) DAVIS DANIELS, Secretary."

Authorised by Mrs. K. Walker, Queensland Secretary, Federal Council for Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Islanders (FCAA), and Secretary, Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Islanders.

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