

THE LAST BARRIER

TO COMPLETE EQUALITY

GOES!

The last barrier to complete equality between aborigines and white people in N.S.W. is expected to vanish during the sittings of State Parliament in September.

State Cabinet, on the last day of July, approved legislation which will enable all aborigines in N.S.W. to be supplied with alcoholic liquor.

The Premier, Mr. R. G. Heffron, announcing Cabinet's decision, said it was made on the grounds of justice and fairness.

The decision, he said, recognised the great change in public attitudes towards aborigines since the enactment of the prohibition in 1867.

It should do away with the exploitation of some Aborigines by illicit suppliers of liquor.

Mr. Heffron said Cabinet had decided to repeal Section 9 of the Aborigines' Protection Act, which became law almost a century ago.

[But Section 9 will continue in force until Parliament passes the Bill. In the meantime hotelkeepers and others should not misinterpret the situation or anticipate the new law by supplying liquor—Editor.]

Section 9 prohibits the sale or supply of liquor to aborigines except in cases of accident or on the prescription of a doctor. The Act was amended in 1943 to allow aborigines to be supplied with liquor if they had a certificate of exemption from the Aborigines Welfare Board.

Mr. Heffron said the decision was based on a recommendation of the Aborigines Welfare Board, and had been made after full consideration of "all relevant reports".

He said the board had assured the Chief Secretary, Mr. C. A. Kelly, that welfare activity would be intensified to help aborigines accustom themselves to the proper use of alcohol.

The decision carried with it a responsibility which must be shared by the whole community, including hotel-keepers, police and, most importantly, THE ABORIGINES THEMSELVES, to see that the arrangements worked satisfactorily.

The Native Welfare Conference in Canberra last year was told that Northern Territory law which gave part-aborigines access to liquor without restrictions had no damaging effects and did not encourage crime.

This State has only 235 full-blood aborigines in the 13,600 aboriginal population.

The Aborigines Welfare Board recommended to Mr. Kelly in 1961 that the drink prohibition end. The Board's report said that Section 9 was "basically discriminating in that it denies to a class of people a right enjoyed by other classes, simply and only because of racial characteristics".

The report also said that the law:—

- Penalised temperate aborigines because of the failings of the intemperate.
- Had not prevented the supply to aborigines of inferior quality liquor, liquor of high potency.



The Premier, Mr. Heffron . . . "justice and fairness".