

“While it is valuable to own property, the building alone would be meaningless for the Aboriginal people unless it represented more than bricks and mortar. This, happily, has been the case. Before the Foundation had full possession of its premises, but while only in partial occupation as an Appeal Campaign Headquarters, Aborigines began attending to seek advice and assistance on many matters. The tempo of this contact with the Centre has increased throughout the year.

“Developments have meant that the Centre has become not only the physical location from which the Foundation operates, but also the heart of a new wave of hope and enthusiasm pulsing into the community.

“Our approach to Aboriginal affairs is based on policy and programmes designed to develop and expand a full community effort in which Aborigines and other Australians participate on terms of full equality. Briefly, the foundation stands for the provision of a whole-hearted response to an expressed need from any member of the Aboriginal community. The only limitation to this is based on the principle that “assisted self-help” should replace charitable handouts.

“I would like to mention at this point the tremendous contribution the Aboriginal people have themselves made. A dedicated group has always been available to initiate, assist and guide the Foundation’s efforts, and I am happy to report that I have experienced nothing but the closest co-operation from Foundation members during my period of office.

“I would also like to pay a particular tribute on this occasion to the N.S.W. Aborigines Welfare Board, whose Chairman, Mr Kingsmill, is with us today. It was the Board who, under the previous Administration, wholeheartedly backed the concept of the Centre, and on whose recommendation the Government of the day made an initial contribution of no less than \$40,000.

“I have a great deal of pleasure in announcing here today that in the current Budget, again on the Board’s recommendation, the Government has made available to the Foundation a grant of \$16,000 to assist it in its future activities. In a time of admitted financial stringency, forced on us by rising costs and the after effects of the calamitous drought, this in itself I think is sufficient surety of our good intentions, of our genuine interest in the affairs of the Aboriginal residents of this State.

“I might add in passing that in addition to this direct donation to the Centre, the Budget also provides, still once again on the recommendation

of the Aborigines Welfare Board, donations of \$20,000 for the Aboriginal Children’s Advancement Society at Sylvania, and \$4,000 for Our Lady’s Home of Compassion at Wilcannia. We have a long way to go before we can say that we have turned the corner in our handling of Aboriginal affairs in this State. But the tide has turned . . . we are on our way to an honourable solution to a problem that has been with us since the days of the First Fleet.

“It may well be that some people feel that we are not moving sufficiently quickly, but in this as in all other matters a certain degree of patience and mutual toleration is needed. We are not in this country possessed of unlimited finance . . . nor can we wave a magic wand that will in one stroke repair the accumulated defects of nearly two centuries. But I do feel that within our limits we are pushing ahead as rapidly as we can in the all important fields of housing, hygiene and education.

“The Foundation, of course, has a major role to play in this advance. In the past I have found it to be most co-operative . . . and I look forward to a continuance of this happy relationship. In officially opening the Centre, I wish it well in its future activities . . . I assure its dedicated officials and supporters of the goodwill and support of my Government, and of the people of N.S.W. . . . and I look forward with them to the day when the integration of European and Aboriginal citizens is a *fait accompli* as distinct from a desired goal.”

To which we might add: “And so say all of us”!

Pen Pal, Please

Colleen Page, 14, would like to have a pen pal—boy or girl—aged from 14 to 16 years. Her hobbies are tennis, softball, stamp collecting, and basketball. Write to Colleen, C/O Post Office, Glenreagh.
