

Aborigines Advancement League (Vic)
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EDITORIAL

F.C.A.A.T.S.I ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 12th Annual Conference of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders has been held.

From a small meeting in a room to a large assembly in an auditorium, the annual conference has grown yearly in size and in scope of work.

It would not be correct to say that it has grown in significance: who would under-rate the significance of those first conferences which brought together for the first time the key activists in Aboriginal advancement?

But it is certainly true to say that it has grown in value as a means of building solidarity within the movement, as a form for expressing a wide range of ideas, and as a launching pad for united action.

This 12th conference brought together a larger number of Aborigines than ever before. The platform - both chairman and speakers - was occupied by a large proportion of Aborigines than ever before. Speakers put their cases bluntly, with a commendable absence of the cautious beating about the bush that might have been expected when people want to criticise themselves, each other or outside bodies.

There were still sessions which were heavily dominated by non-Aborigines, notably the mechanics of deciding where and when the 13th annual conference will be held. Many of the functional committees are still headed by non-Aborigines, and no Aboriginal or Islander nominated for the position of General Secretary of the Council.

Not that we agree that the Federal Council or its annual conference should be Aborigines only; the movement needs the joint efforts of people of goodwill, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Nevertheless, the policy of promoting Aboriginal leadership and spokespersonship is sound and ought to be applied in every possible way.

We believe that the initiative taken by the League in acceding Aboriginal representatives to the conference and encouraging non-Aboriginal members to attend as observers is one step in that direction. The next steps are clear: strengthen the Victorian branch of F.C.A.A.T.S.I., and prepare the way for Victoria to make a greater contribution to the whole movement in general and to the 1970 conference in particular.