

“When an aboriginal reaches a certain stage of development he can gain an exemption certificate making him a citizen.

“Thousands are not exempted because they have not reached that stage.

“But when they get this certificate, aged full-bloods cannot live on an aboriginal station, otherwise they lose their rights.

“To receive pensions the aborigines must leave the station just when they need its care and protection most.

“Cruel, isn't it ?

“They usually go to live in squalor in humpies or on the banks of creeks, where, without the guidance of the station manager, they are often joined by loafing aborigines who help to drink their pensions.

“I have just returned from a tour of inspection for the Aborigines' Welfare Board and have seen aborigines living in terrible shacks to qualify for pensions.

“Take the case of Mrs. Page, of Woodenbong.

“Her husband, Walter Page, was a full-blood aboriginal member of the Aborigines' Welfare Board.

“He is dead, and his widow is civilised, a non-drinker, and understands the value of money (but she hasn't got any).

“She can read and write and follow the newspapers, but she is living in miserable poverty.

“Why no widows' pension ? That's democracy for you.”

The latest annual report of the N.S.W. Government Aborigines' Welfare Board, of which Mr. Sawtell is a member, states:

“Pensions are paid to exempted aborigines living off stations or reserves, or if living on a reserve which is not under supervision of a manager.

“This distinction, in the board's view, is illogical and unjust.”

Mr. Sawtell went on: “Years ago the N.S.W. Welfare Board exchanged polite little notes with the Federal Government.

“The State wanted pensions for aborigines, but the Federal Government said ‘No’.

“Then I hopped in and started my one-man cold war against the Commonwealth Government.

“Politicians have promised to ask questions in the Federal House but haven't done so. No votes on aborigines.

“Ten years ago there was a 14-point referendum, of which the last point was the acceptance of aborigines into our Constitution.

“The referendum was defeated and since then no one has made a move.

“I worked with the aborigines 50 years ago when they were pulled along by chains and chained around trees.”

Now consider the views of a N.S.W. Education Department officer, an M.A., whose cooler academic approach has not, like Mr. Sawtell's, been inflamed by years of sweat side by side with aborigines.

Mr. H. W. S. Philp has studied our treatment of the aboriginal, against whom he says, our present laws discriminate.

No wars have been waged against the Australian aborigines as were waged against the American Indians.

“We killed the aboriginal,” he said, “by a policy of peaceful penetration, often by a policy of kindness.

“Prejudice and discrimination came later.”

Until self-government came to the colonies in the 1850's the law was on the side of the aboriginal, said Mr. Philp.