



TRUGANINI

A plea to let her rest in peace

They respect their dead but they don't worship them.

So it doesn't impress Truganini's descendants when the Post Office announces that she will be featured in a set of postage stamps.

The announcement, in fact, will bring the whole nasty affair to a head again.

There are moves to have the Truganini case brought to the attention of the Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Senator Cavanagh, tonight.

For the Tasmanian aboriginal queen — the last full-blood of her tribe — is still not allowed to cross into the dreamtime.

Next year Truganini will have been dead for 100 years, but her remains are still not buried.

Today, I talked to Mr Jim Berg who said he was one of her followers.

He described the "honor" bestowed on Truganini by the Post Office as a backhanded tribute.

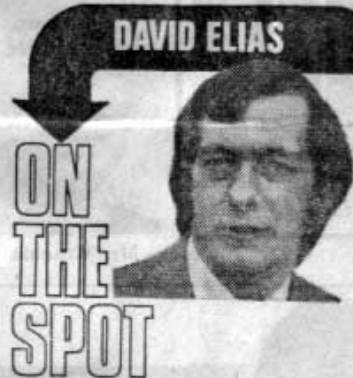
"We don't need statues and the like to remind us of our past," he said.

Mr Berg, who is chairman of the Aboriginal Legal Service, said he had a family tree tracing his ancestry back to Truganini.

"I respect her," he said. "We all do, especially the old people."

"And it upsets them that she is not in her proper resting place."

The history of Truga-



nini's remains is remarkable.

They are now kept in the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart and for years aboriginals have been protesting.

Truganini died on May 8, 1876, and within hours the Royal Society of Tasmania was clamoring for her body.

It wanted to add her to its anthropological collection.

The Tasmanian government which had hounded Truganini and her people in life intervened.

She was buried in a secret grave, but was exhumed on the orders of a later government.

Even as recently as five years ago the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies made a plea that the bones be kept in its museum.

The institute said that all other remains of the Tasmanians in the museum and university collections would have to be buried — a tragedy for the scientific world.

Since then there have been plans to bury her



JIM BERG . . . "it's a backhanded tribute."

next year on the centenary of her death.

Mr Berg said today that these plans had come to nothing and the question was still open.

"The issue gets revived every now and then and this stamp trouble is the sort of thing which brings it up again."

The Postmaster-General, Senator Bishop, said that Truganini and the five other famous Australian women to be featured in the set of stamps had been portrayed before.

But never together in a complete set.

The other women are Edith Cowan, Louisa Lawson, Ethel Richardson,

Catherine Spence, and Constance Stone.

Jim Berg, 37, and married with a young family, was born in the Western District.

He said: "I think a suitable inscription on the stamp should read 'Truganini, last of the full-blood Tasmanians who was wiped out with her tribe by the whites.'"

"That's the only value I can put on it."

Mr Berg said that Senator Cavanagh will tonight attend a Melbourne meeting of aboriginals where Truganini's case will again be raised.

"Perhaps the Senator can do something to help her," he said.