

# ABOS.' CASE TO GO BEFORE UN

*Herald Special Correspondent.*

**DARWIN, Friday.** — An appeal has been made to the United Nations on behalf of Australian natives in the northwest who are seeking protection against Australians.

The appeal has been made direct to the Secretary-General of the U.N. who has been asked to raise the matter of Australia's treatment of her aborigines in the general assembly.

A similar appeal has been made to the World Federation of Trade Unions by a Western Australian committee for the defence of natives' rights, and has been supported by dozens of organisations in Western Australia and the eastern States.

This action underlines recent allegations of maltreatment in the Northern Territory, where a conference on conditions of native employment has been called by the Minister for the Interior (Mr Johnston). This conference is to be held in Alice Springs in January.

The appeal to the U.N. sets forth demands made by the north-west native workers and appeals for the adoption of the following broad policy:

We appeal to the U.N. to take up the question of securing for the aboriginal people of Australia

liberty and rights in line with the principles of democracy. For colored Australians of mixed blood and for completely detribalised full-blooded aborigines we appeal for full citizenship rights, and all measures necessary for the training and absorption of these citizens into industry and rural occupations on the basis of full equality socially, politically and economically.

For tribal and semi-tribal aborigines we appeal for inviolable reserves, the aborigines to have absolute legal ownership of the land of the reserves together with all mineral and other resources.

Administration should be centralised in the hands of the Commonwealth Government. Instruction should be given in the language of the tribe as well as in English.

Government aid should be based on gradual economic development with pastoral pursuits, handicrafts, etc., on a co-operative basis and under the control of the aborigines themselves.

## How Trouble Started

The action has resulted directly from trouble which took place in Pilbarra near Port Hedland in May when 800 native station hands were involved in a strike for a minimum wage of 30/ a week. Two aboriginal leaders — Clancy McKenna and Dooley, were arrested as a result of the strike and sentenced to three months' imprisonment under section 47 of the Native Administration Act, which prohibits any person from persuading a native to leave lawful service without the consent of a protector.

A white contractor, Donald McLeod, who had been elected by the natives to represent them in their demands for better conditions insisted on the natives' right to organise and elect their own representative. McLeod was then also charged under section 47 and fined a total of £50, with £46 costs, in default five months' imprisonment. An appeal to the West Australian Supreme Court was dismissed and notice of appeal has now been given in the High Court. It is expected the case will be re-heard early next year.

In the meantime the committee for the defence of natives' rights, of which Padre H. V. P. Hodge, of Perth, is secretary, has issued a circular setting out its side of the struggle for native emancipation.

Copies of the appeal to the U.N. have been sent to the Australian Representative (Mr Paul Hasluck), the Prime Minister (Mr Chifley), the Minister for External Affairs (Dr. Evatt), the Minister for the Interior (Mr Johnston) and members of Parliament.

Counsel for McLeod at his trial in June claimed that the Western

Australian Native Administration Act with its restrictions on the freedom of aborigines and their virtual slavery was contrary to the British Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, under which slavery was "utterly and forever abolished and declared unlawful throughout the British colonies."

Counsel further stated that under section 25 of the Act a native could not neglect, desert or quit his work without committing a criminal offence.

He claimed that they were serfs, tied to the landowner as securely as feudal serfs of the middle ages.

The circular quotes a classified advertisement from a West Australian daily paper of June 14 this year which read: "AA Cattle station in good cattle country East Kimberley, 330,170 acres, conducted almost on local native labor, making for most economical administration."

Information received in Darwin from Port Hedland gives details of further developments in the strike which, in spite of prosecutions, apparently still exists in fact.

One letter says that of 450 natives who were working on stations between Port Hedland and Marble Bar only 50 are remaining at work and that this number is dwindling. Award rate for pastoral work in the district is £3/14/6 a week, but a number of whites have started work at £2/7/ a week.

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