

'OSTRICHISM', ABORIGINAL POETESS SAYS

WHITE people in Australia suffered from "ostrichism," aboriginal poet Mrs. Kath Walker said on her arrival in Melbourne last night.

Mrs. Walker, whose home is in Brisbane has come to Melbourne to publicise her first book of poems, "We Are Going."

"The book is really a shock book, because the poems express the aboriginal point of view," she said.

"Aborigines know a lot more about white people than the white people know about us because they stick their heads in sand and don't try to understand us."

"The idea of my book was to allow white people to get into the sphere of the aborigine to see their point of view."

Side by Side

"I write for all people," she said, "but a black person does not write unless he writes about color."

"He has to open that gate first."

Mrs. Walker is hesitant

about calling herself a poet, since she says she still has much to learn.

She prefers to call herself a civil rights fighter.

"At present white people consider the aborigine a black replica of the white race," she said.

"The ideal is integration where an aborigine can keep his own language and culture but live side by side in dignity with white people."

Six Stages

"Assimilation was forced upon us, but if every discriminating law in the books was thrown out then the aborigines could choose to integrate when they were ready to do so."

Mrs. Walker said that the aboriginal population could not be "lumped" together but should be divided into six different stages of civilisation from nomad to completely assimilated citizen.

The nomads should be allowed to remain in their natural habitat until such time as they themselves chose to be integrated.

She also condemned missions and reserves where aborigines were segregated in case they were "contaminated" by whites.

"But since the numbers of mixed blood aborigines far outnumber the pure bloods, it seems that this 'contamination' has already taken place."

Another of Mrs. Walker's ambitions is to "salvage" aboriginal folklore and legends before they die out.

She will spend two days in Melbourne on this trip but will return early next month on a lecture tour for Abscol.



MRS. KATH WALKER