

Natives seek a better deal

'PARLIAMENT' HEARS ABOUT GRIEVANCES

From KEVIN CHILDS

CANBERRA. — The boomerang curtain separating Australia's aboriginals and white people must be torn down.

Political power must be used and an end put to molly-coddling "for the aboriginals' own sake."

This is the mood of the Australian aboriginal today, judged by the 350-strong "black parliament" which met in Canberra over Easter.

The 12-year-old Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders met to find peaceful solutions to the aboriginals' problems.

But anger and resentment were there. They have not yet reached the stage where "black power" is being sought, but the need for power to right the wrongs is being sought.

Two women gave the most powerful speeches to the conference. Both are aboriginal. One has been a political candidate, the other is now.

BARRIER

Mrs Kath Walker, widowed mother of two sons, poetess and A.L.P. candidate in next month's Queensland elections, produced the phrase "boomerang curtain" to describe the barrier between welfare agencies and aboriginals.

This tiny, devastatingly articulate 46-year-old woman rubbished the "paternalistic, misguided great white father" policies of Governments in Australia.

The answer she said, was in political power — "the dirty, filthy muck that is politics."

Mrs Joyce Clague of Alice Springs, who campaigned unsuccessfully for the Northern Territory Legislative Council, told about an aboriginal who was ordered off a mission because he objected to infected meat being ground up for old people and children to eat.

Her political experiences were listened to closely by the 200 aboriginals.



MRS KATH WALKER ... "came out fighting."



MRS JOYCE CLAGUE ... "refused to eat bad food."

FIRST TIME

For the first time the council now has a full-time paid secretary.

Mr Jack Horner, of Turramurra, Sydney, is getting \$60 a week for a six months' trial period.

Mr Horner said today: "I've been in the aboriginal movement since 1957, and was honorary secretary of a Sydney aboriginal organisation for 8½ years.

"Mainly I have been working as a bookshop assistant and clerical worker."

Mr Horner, 46, recently submitted to a publisher a biography of William Ferguson, an aboriginal who began agitating for his race's rights in the 1930s.

"He was the first aboriginal elected to the Aboriginal Welfare Board in NSW, and stood for Federal Parliament in 1949," Mr Horner said.

"His campaign issues

were lost in the clamor of the time."

Mr Horner says council has moved away from educating the white Australians to educating aboriginals.

"The turning point was the 1967 referendum," he said. "Until then aboriginals weren't sure that they were even Australian citizens."

"Each State treated them as State citizens."

He plans to fight against such "wrongs" as the Queensland system of paying aboriginals' wages straight into banks.

"They are not even allowed to handle their own money — and people say this teaches them to save money!" he said.

Palm Island, off the Queensland coast, is used as a penal settlement for aboriginals, but can't be visited by outsiders.

Mr Horner said this must stop.

"Land rights is a burning issue, and it's complicated by the mineral wealth being found," he said.

Mr Bryant, MHR for the Melbourne seat of Wills, is senior vice-president of the council, and one of the 25 who attended its first meeting.

"This was the first conference at which the aboriginal people acted as their own chief spokesmen," he said.

Mrs Walker told the conference: "When you leave, go back to your homes — homes that are rat holes you have inherited from European-Australian society — and unite your people, and bring them out fighting ...