A MUCH-NEEDED REFORM IN CARING FOR ABORIGINES

Taken from an Editorial in “The Sydney Morning Herald”

The news that the Federal Government intends to spend another £1 million on social services for aborigines will be widely welcomed. The extra money will be devoted to old-age, invalid and widows’ pensions for aborigines living on supervised stations. The need for such expenditure has been evident for many years, and in New South Wales it has been urged in successive annual reports of the Aborigines’ Welfare Board.

As things now stand, aborigines are entitled to certain Commonwealth social service benefits. This is the case no matter how much or little aboriginal blood they may have, and no matter where they live. But pensions are quite another matter. They are paid only to exempted aborigines living away from stations or reserves, or to those living on reserves which are not under the supervision of a manager.

In other words, aborigines who live on stations supervised by a manager are not entitled to age and invalid pensions, widows’ pensions or maternity allowances. And yet they pay taxation, including social service contributions, in exactly the same way as whites.

The solution is clear enough. Allow them, if they are poor, not only to live on stations but to draw their pensions. In that case, they will not need to draw free rations; they can buy their own food. It is simply a rearrangement of State assistance. The cost will not be large; the aborigines affected need no longer feel that they are penniless “no-hopers”, dependent on free hand-outs of food and clothing, and the victims of what the N.S.W. Aborigines’ Welfare Board calls an “illogical and unjustified” distinction. It is most satisfactory that the Federal Government has decided to abolish that distinction.

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The creed of these men is aptly summed up by their president, who says: “It is true that the croc’ is a big target, taken overall. So is an Army tank, but a croc’ like a tank, has a limited number of vulnerable points. The area in which you can shoot him with most deadly effect is equivalent, all told, to about half the size of a rabbit. That’s one of the things that makes the game so fascinating”.

When talking about his beloved adopted country, the North of Australia, this Frenchman always declares: “America’s ‘wild west’ has nothing on it”.

Men like Charlie Dargie, William Bullock, and, indeed, most of the professional crocodile hunters of Northern Australia, are by their shooting abilities and courage creating a legend for toughness which will endure like the great names of the “wild west” of America.

This pretty lass is Colleen Moore of Wreck Bay Station.