

OURSELVES AND THE ABORIGINES

The West Australian Government investigation of the conditions of the aborigines has again brought to public notice a question which is at once urgent and grave.

Although the Federal Government disclaims responsibility on the grounds that the States are responsible for the aborigines within their own boundaries, the matter surely ought to be one of concern by parliamentarians at Canberra.

The Federal Government is the people's supreme legislative authority, and the welfare of the aborigine is a concern of the people generally.

It is imperative that steps should immediately be taken to remedy the great injustice from which the original inhabitants of this country are suffering. We have occupied their hunting grounds, pushed them further and further back into areas where food and water are almost unobtainable, treated them with heartless contempt, and, generally speaking, forgotten their existence.

Admittedly, church missions are doing noble work where they have been established, but they are unable to cope with the problem as a whole, and should not be expected to do so.

If there is no public conscience in this matter, little, if anything, will be done. Ultimately, the responsibility rests with the people, and the people must make their voices to be heard on high.

Is it too much to ask that we who have dispossessed the aboriginal of his lands and his living, and who now share in the bounties of this land, should at least guarantee to our darker brethren equality of opportunity of life and happiness?

All honour to those who have already given of their time and service on behalf of the aborigines, but now the time has come for such a public outcry on their behalf that public opinion can no longer be ignored. Governments must act, and act now!

WILLIAM BOTTOMLEY

A PRAYER.

- Lord our God, Thy children need Thee yet
Their feet to guide, their hearts with love to fill;
- give the quickened ear, lest we forget
That Thou art speaking still.