

28/08/2024, 14:29

24 Mar 1882 - THE CORANDERRK ABORIGINAL STATION.

Argus (Melbourne, Vic. : 1848 - 1957), Friday 24 March 1882, page 10

THE CORANDERRK ABORIGINAL

STATION.

A deputation, consisting of Messrs. Deakin, Laurens, M'Coll, and W. M. Clark, M.L.A.'s, and the Revs. R. Hamilton, A. M'Vean, Alex. Yule, and A. Hardie waited upon the

Chief Secretary yesterday in reference to the future management of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station. They supported the proposal to transfer the control of the station from the Central Board to the Chief Secretary's department, and the Rev. Messrs. Hamilton and M'Vean urged that Mr. Green should be re-instated as superintendent. The following memorial on the subject was presented :—

"March 23, 1882. "The Hon. J. M. Grant, Chief Secretary.

"Sir,—Your memorialists would most respectfully submit to you the following considerations in coming to a decision with reference to the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station.

"As friends and well-wishers of the aboriginals, we desire to protest against some of the recommendations made to you on behalf of the Central Board for the protection of aborigines. We consider that the wishes of the natives themselves should be taken into account and gratified whenever such gratification

would be consistent with the good management of

the station.

"We are of opinion that the natives are the first persons to be consulted with regard to their overseers and any proposed changes in their way of living.

We hold that their sentiments of attachment to the soil or to particular persons should be allowed for, and that their welfare should be studiously secured by those who have charge of them. The Central Board, we regret to say, appears to have proceeded on quite a contrary theory, and has been supported in its attitude by a

national mission. Its doctrine appears to be that the natives are to be dealt with as if they were so many head of cattle ; that they are to have superintendents in whom they have no confidence, and for whom they have no affection ; that they are to be ruled in all things by the determination of men at a distance, who take no steps to make themselves acquainted with the feelings of the natives, or who, if they are aware of them, peremptorily disregard them ; that they are to be evicted from the place to which they are most attached as if they were so many gypsies, without claim upon the state or the people who have dispossessed them. We have no desire to judge between the natives and the officials of the board. The evi-

dence which will decide the facts in this issue are now, we believe, before you. But we would draw your attention to the painful circumstance that the complaints of the blacks are frequent and serious. They complain of their clothing, of their food, of their habitations, of their furni-

ture, of their treatment in sickness of their religious education, of the suspension of their wages, and of the general demeanour of those in authority over them. The very fact that such complaints are made is surely sufficient justification for an entire change of management, which change, we believe, would be as advantageous to the state in an economical point of view, as to the natives from a humanitarian point of view. We would ask, sir, that you yourself should undertake the general control of this station, and that under your guidance it should be managed as far as possible in accordance with the desires and sentiments of those in whose interest it was established. We have no wish, sir, that the natives should be pampered, petted, or spoiled, we believe that under a proper superintendent they will prove far more industrious and contented than in the past. We feel assured that the duties such a control would place upon you would be of the slightest. The cause of all the dissension at Coranderrk has been the unjust despotism under which its inmates

28/08/2024, 14:29

24 Mar 1882 - THE CORANDERRK ABORIGINAL STATION.

have been coerced. We ask, sir, that they should be treated temperately, firmly, and justly, or perhaps leniently. They are the last remnant of a dying race, which in a few years will have passed from the continent we have colonised, and all we de-sire is that, through you, sir, they may be enabled to end their days in peace."

Mr. GRANT promised to give his best con-sideration to the memorial, and to submit it to his colleagues.