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Govt. backing for increase in Aborigines' wages

SYDNEY. — The Commonwealth Government supported wage increases for Northern Territory Aboriginal stockmen the Government's counsel Mr. A. E. Woodward, told the full bench of the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission yesterday.

The commission is hearing an application which seeks variation of the Cattle Station Industry (Northern Territory) award.

The North Australian Workers' Union has made the application, which seeks wage increases from £2 to £10 a week for thousands of Aboriginal station workers in the Northern Territory.

Mr. Woodward said the Commonwealth Government hoped that wage increases would be granted to Northern Territory Aboriginal station workers progressively.

Under the present award Aborigines received wages well below those of European workers.

"In the first place it is the Commonwealth's view that the minimum wages of the award, should as a result of these proceedings apply equally to Aborigines as well as to other Australian workers," Mr. Woodward said.

"The application of the union in these proceedings would produce this result—but we shall have something

to say about the method by which the result is to be produced."

Mr. Woodward said the Commonwealth Government was concerned that the manner of implementing the claim did not result in increased harm to the Aborigines it sought to assist.

He said the possible extent of the problem was seen if the union's simple solution was applied to the situation painted by employers.

The Northern Territory Cattle Producers' Association, the N.T. Pastoral Lessees' Association and the Cattlemen's Association of North Australia have opposed the application.

Mr. J. R. Kerr, Q.C., said on Thursday that wage increases would put most Aboriginal stockmen out of work.

He said employers found European workers far more attractive because of their reliability and usefulness. They would employ Europeans in preference to Aborigines, he said.

Mr. Woodward said the Commonwealth believed employers were unnecessarily pessimistic about the number of Aborigines who could be employed on award wages.

serious matter for Aboriginal workers and their dependants and would place a very heavy burden on the Northern Territory Administration.

He said the Government believed ways could be found of reducing the impact of the proposed variation.

"It is the Commonwealth's hope that some solution can be found along these lines, that is to say, a gradual or a deferred application of award rates over a stated period.

"The Commonwealth does, however, stress that the solution should be found in these proceedings and not in any way deferred in the hope that it can be found in some later proceedings.

"The Commonwealth believes that a phased application of award rates would enable employers to adapt themselves to this in an economic sense."

Some unemployment

Mr. Woodward said it would also assist the Aborigines to adjust to different economic arrangements.

The Commonwealth believed quite a substantial number of Aborigines could and would be employed at award wages, if the industry had the time to adjust its thinking on the matter.

"However, there can be no doubt that some unemployment will result.

"Here again it would greatly assist the Territory Administration if it could deal with the resulting problems in stages."

The hearing was adjourned until July 20 at Alice Springs.

Mr. Kerr said he proposed to call about a dozen witnesses during the three-day hearing at Alice Springs.

The commission will make an inspection of about nine cattle stations during that time.

Case of untimely theft

WAGGA. — Temora watchmaker and jeweller Mr. H. A. Nicholson cancelled the insurance on his stocks a short time ago — and was the victim of a £3500 theft on Thursday night.

Thieves broke into Mr. Nicholson's new Hoslins Street store and ransacked the main display window. They carried off tray loads of all types of rings and watches as well as taking numerous other items.

The theft is believed to have occurred in the early hours of yesterday morning.

The thieves jammed open the front door and apparently carried the goods to a car waiting in the main street.

No burglar alarm system is fitted to either the display window or the shop proper. Mr. Nicholson said yesterday afternoon it would take years for his business to

Time to adjust

"The Commonwealth believes quite a substantial number of Aborigines could be employed if the industry had time to adjust itself to this matter," he said.

"It believes firstly that the employers have painted an excessively gloomy picture of the work value of the Aborigines.

"If that picture is accurately painted showing only a very few Aborigines as being worth an award wage, then presumably about 1000 male Aborigines at present employed in the industry would lose their jobs overnight."

Mr. Woodward said this would obviously be a most

Deafness cleared defendant

RABAU, Friday. — Rabaul district court waited an hour for a deaf mute to appear today, only to discover him sitting in court all the time, without knowing his name had been called.

A charge against the man — Toulaour Toir — was withdrawn and a difficulty

Public Solicitor, Mr. Robert Cruikshank, who represented him, was unable

CLOAKROOM space was at a premium but hats, ranging from trilbies to bowlers, were plentiful during luncheon of the Australian Chartered Accountants Research Society, at the Victoria yesterday. Finding the most popular hat rack — the banister rail to the Banquet Room — fully occupied, this late arrival in desperation carefully placed his on the floor.

Miners seek medical fee