NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

The fourth General Meeting of the Society for 1984 will be held in the S.A. Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide on:

MONDAY, 25TH JUNE, 1984 AT 8.00 P.M.

AGENDA

1. Apologies.

2. Minutes of the previous General Meeting:
Minutes of the previous General Meeting, held Monday, 28th May, 1984 to be confirmed. A copy of these minutes is attached.

3. Papers and Journals:
Papers and Journals received since the last General Meeting, from other Societies and Organizations will be tabled at the Meeting.

4. Business:
To remind members that the July meeting will be held at the new address - Conservation Centre, 120 Wakefield Street, Adelaide and to use the side entrance.

5. Speaker:
Dr. Peter Sutton, Consultant Anthropologist with wide-ranging experience in this field, will give an address to the Society entitled:

"Aboriginal Botany"

6. Supper will be served and a Trading table held.

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The Advertiser

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THE ABORIGINAL QUESTION.

Everyone is anxious for the welfare of the fast-dwindling native population, and therefore the petition to the Federal Government and Parliament, now in circulation, for the establishment of a "model aboriginal State" is welcomed by many signatures. In the far north of the continent there is still country which is practically a terra incognita to the white, or at all events free from white settlement, and, adopted, therefore, for use as a happy hunting ground for the survivors of the race we have dispossessed.

To some this may appear at first sight like manufacturing for ourselves a colored problem, but the native inhabitants of that continent are not, like the negroes, a focused people, nor, if they were, would his growth involve the menace to the white race which is presented by the rapid multiplication of the Bantus, Basutos, and Zulus of South Africa. An advocate of the projected model State would have to be sanguine, indeed, to expect by means of it to secure the preservation for all time of the direct descendants of palaeolithic man. Yet the existence of the far north of Australia of a good deal of unsettled country affords an opportunity for establishing a sanctuary for that portion of the race domiciled there, or likely to be attracted thither, and humanity and ethnology alike demand that the experiment should be made.

The promoters of the movement have been encouraged by the experience of New Zealand with its Maoris. In the relations of the Maoris with their settlers there were the same elements of tragedy as characteristic the relations of the blacks and whites in Australia. Drunkenness, idleness, and immorality were vices the natives in both places contracted from the invaders, but the Maoris, being a more virile race, were, for a time, to average their degradation on their civilised conquerors by keeping up a state of warfare which for years retarded the progress of New Zealand. Had the whites done nothing more than effect their subjugation their lot would have been as pitiable as that of our own blacks, for, acquiring the less desirable fruits of the whites and those more tending to their destruction, they must before very long have been added to the long list of disappearing races. But their lease of existence has been infinitely prolonged by a wise statesmanship, which has done for them what the promoters of the model State are seeking to effect for our far northern aborigines. "Savage" is not a pleasant word, though etymologically it means no more than a denizen of the woods. The Maoris were actually undesirable, and savage enough when discovered by Captain Cook in 1770; but they were "tame savages," despite their ruffling and cannibalism. They have been subjected to the long interval by methods not always honourable to the white man; but they fought most gallantly for their independence, and in the end they were defeated, their long conflict, with the whites ended, not in a capitulation, but in a treaty under which they were accorded advantages to them other colored races in the British Empire commands the respect felt for the Maoris. Some of the Red Indians of North America have indeed enjoyed themselves capable of a high degree of civilization, but as tribes they were only able, like our own hippasus blacks, to assimilate the type of civilization. The Maoris, on the other hand, have settled down to an agricultural life on lands reserved for their sole occupation, and since 1893 their number has increased from 65,000 to 51,000. They have not only a dominion of their own, but also a Minister expressly appointed to protect their interests, together with four representatives in the Legislative Council elected from among themselves. They do not complain of oppression, and no compulsion is solicited for them as there is for the aborigines of Australia. Nor will there be for the aboriginals the promoters of the model State are convinced, when, realizing what the loss of hunting land means to them, the Australian public insist on placing them in much the same position relatively to the white population as the Maoris of New Zealand occupy. They would be given a territory, possibly in Araluen Land, with the right ultimately to manage it according to their own laws and customs, so long as these included neither cannibalism nor the practice of期内 rites. Whites, except officials, missionaries, agricultural instructors, and others holding licenses, would be excluded under severe penalties, and there would be no compulsory detention for any "back, though a desertion would forfeit any land granted to him, which would revert to the Crown. Finally, the model State would enjoy direct representation in the Federal Parliament on the lines, as a modified form at first, of the representation possessed by the natives of the New Zealand Parliament.

Obedient tribute is paid to the missionaries for a great deal of what has been done for the preservation of these pathetic survivors of primitive man-neries of the stone age. Religious teachers will move as freely in the new State as they do outside, but when other representatives of the white race are concerned, the feeling seems to be that the less the blacks have to do with them the better. It is not that every white man, except a missionary or an official, who moves among them is a rogue intent on corrupting and degrading them or is indifferent as to whether these consequences are produced by contact with him or not. The feeling is that the civilization and the native are inseparable, and that humanity is served by keeping them, for an indefinite time, as far as possible apart. It has been urged by Mrs. Bates and others that the most innocent customs may produce the direst consequences among the blacks; that it is almost hopeless, for example, to teach them to make a proper use of clothing, which, to their serious danger, they often persist in wearing when rain-clothes. But there are reasons why a psychologist might explain that appear to deserve the insensible extinction of our blacks, whose traditions, beliefs, and habits have been shattered by a civilization to which they were not born; and believing that nothing is to be gained by evading the melancholy fact that the whites are becoming the dominant people in the Island which the British Colonies are demanding the retention by the inhabitants of the model State of their own laws and customs. To leave them to take their chances is to doom them to annihilation, for, as the area of white settlement expands, the natural food supplies of the nomadic tribes are correspondingly diminished. We are told, largely by Darwinians that the extinction of the wild is a law of Nature; but it is only for a strange environment that our natives are unfit. For their own they are well adapted, and this environment is not incapable of improvement to that great advantage. The petitioners remind us that the blacks are anything but the naturally degraded race they were once supposed to be; they make more than possible progress and cultivation, and their mental powers are exemplified in the number of recruits they have made to the Christian ministry. With a model State of their own, contact with civilization may be so graduated as to lose its fatal effects. To ward off such contact from every black is not possible without a degree of coercion, which the petitioners do not contemplate, but it is impossible not to approve of their demand that more drastic steps should be taken to safeguard the victims of the blighting influence exercised by a few class of whites on the fringe of civilization.