

LAKE TYERS PLAN

'UNFAIR'

FORUM

AS an aboriginal, I am concerned about the future of the Lake Tyers settlement and I would like you to help me in calling for a fuller investigation of the question before it is too late.

The settlement is to be handed over to the aboriginals at present living there.

This will virtually be "lock, stock and barrel," and they will, as I understand it, even be able to sell their share if they wish.

This is what concerns me.

It is wrong for the Government to hand the settlement over to the selected few aboriginals living there now, since there is some doubt as to whether they are capable of making a "go" of it.

I believe that the settlement should be held in perpetual trust for the aboriginal people as a whole.

Suppose the people living there are given sole rights to the settlement and they decide to sell it.

What of the money they would receive? Are they really capable of using it wisely, or will it be frittered away on drinking, gambling or other pursuits?

What of the land itself, if sold to a private person or organisation? It will be gone forever from the aboriginal.

Future generations of aboriginals will be denied rights to the land and, worse still, denied the opportunity to develop farming, fishing or timber interests which could be conducted at or from the settlement.

Isn't this a rather short-sighted policy?

The Government should have some kind of insurance on Lake Tyers and before it is handed over there should be some conditions and restrictions attached to it.

The land should be reserved for all aboriginal people, not just those living there at present, and they should not have the right to sell it.

Over the years there have been quite a few aboriginal reserves in Victoria and what has happened to them?

The Lake Conda Settlement in Portland was sold to provide land for soldier settlers, and people living there were moved to Lake Tyers.

Another reserve at Badger Creek (next to the Healesville Sanctuary) was closed and these people, too, were moved to Lake Tyers.

There is a history of cases where the aboriginals

and land originally reserved for them gradually whittled away.

There is another side to the story. On Lake Tyers there is a church built by the black man and in it is an honor board for World War I. The five names on it are all those of aboriginals. One of those five names was Percy Pepper and I am his son. — **PHILLIP PEPPER** (Ex-Member of the Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council to the Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs). Newmerella, near Orbost.

Sun-News Pictorial

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