

Neville Bonner Is Condemned

Aboriginal contender for the casual vacancy in the Senate which will be caused through the resignation of Dame Anabelle Rankin, Mr. Neville Bonner, was described in Townsville at the weekend as a black Judas.

Noted Aboriginal music teacher and singer Mr. Harold Blair made this condemnation of Mr. Bonner at the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders conference.

He was commenting in a session of the conference on a report that Mr. Bonner had called agitators for equal rights for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as "rat-bags" and radicals.

Mr. Blair said that it appeared very fitting that Mr. Bonner had made his statements at Easter time. He had betrayed his race as Judas had betrayed Christ.

Mr. Blair asked "For what price? . . . a seat in the Senate.

"Where does Mr. Bonner's self respect finish?

"We had all thought very highly of Mr. Bonner up to this stage. The conference was going to send him a telegram offering him our encouragement and support in his campaign to gain election for the Senate seat.

"Now we are vicious at his attitude. We will withdraw any support which we may have given him.

"We are at a complete loss to understand his attitude. We do not regard him as a member of our race any longer.

"Why has the Aboriginal lost his self respect, dignity and pride. This is what we are trying to discover and fight to rectify the situation. Mr. Bonner's statement has proved a sad rebuff to us, especially as it comes from one of our own to whom we gave respect.

"To show that he is the equal of the white man the Aborigine must show initiative and discover

where the faults lie and then fight to eliminate them.

"We must show the Government that we have that initiative and present a concrete case to the Government in order to ensure that present policies are changed. We must have constructive action. That is what a government will listen to.

"I will contact Mr. Bonner direct. I hope I see him as I pass through Brisbane on my way home. I will express to him my personal disgust at his statement.

"Surely it is not Liberal policy to rat on one's own people. I am rather happy that he is a member of the Liberal Party. Had he been a member of the Australian Labour Party I fear that I would have been forced to tear up my membership ticket of that party."

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