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ABORIGINES FACE BAD WINTER, SAYS LEADER

PROOF of maladministration of native affairs in Victoria would be placed before any State inquiry into conditions of aborigines at Lake Tyers station, the president of the Australian Aborigines' League, (Mr. W. Onus) said last night.

SUN 16 FEB 48

Aborigines living off the reservation faced an appalling time this winter, he added. They were living in tumble-down shacks and bag humpies.

"These people are still the responsibility of the Government," declared Mr. Onus.

He was commenting on the statement by the secretary of the Aborigines Board (Mr. N. Garnet) that allegations by aboriginal welfare officer, Miss Cora Gilsenan, were "off the beam."

Miss Gilsenan said aborigines were leaving the station and refusing to return because they were terrified. She also alleged they were paid only 3d. an hour for work and that fines were imposed for any trivial "offence."

Mr. Garnet claimed aborigines had gone pea-picking for Gippsland farmers, who were glad to employ them at £12 to £15 a week.

Mr. Onus said this wage is purely seasonal. At the end of a season a native would be lucky to average £4 a week.

Outlining conditions at the settlement, Miss Gilsenan said

yesterday that if aborigines stood up for what they considered their rights, they were branded as "agitators" and expelled, she said. Differences of opinion with the management or the matron resulted in food supplies being cut off for whole families.

Small offences such as trespass brought heavy fines and expulsion; and giving information about conditions at Lake Tyers to outsiders was treated similarly.

What the aborigines needed was understanding management, not police action.