

Are we prepared to help our half-castes?

ARE we whites and the Government of this State — theoretically our servant — prepared to take up the challenge posed by the mixed blood "River Bankers" up Shepparton way?

On this page on Saturday we gave you the unsavory side of their story.

They are a pitiful people with good and bad in them, and the fact that so many of them have made good suggests that the good in them is greater than the bad.

Theirs is not the only mixed blood settlement in Victoria that our laws prevent us from recognising officially.

The Lake Tyers reserve is the only mixed blood settlement for which the State accepts responsibility.

And on the somewhat vague statistics it is possible to get about these colonies, the Tyers reserve is less in magnitude than the River Bank settlement on the Goulburn, between Shepparton and Mooroopna.

Those two towns have been perplexed for very many years about the mixed blood families that have built their humpies on the river flats.

Should they turn them out for ever? Should they try to do something really concrete to help them?

Opinion has always been divided; still is.

At the moment there is a committee of representative men and one woman which was formed about a year ago

to "do something" about this problem.

It has met frustration after frustration.

That does not mean that nothing is being done for these people.

Spiritual guidance is in the hands of the Church of Christ by agreement of the Ministers' Fraternal. And that Church has done much to help.

VARIOUS welfare organisations are doing their bit, and criticised by those who say that charity begins at home, are making clothing and other hand-outs.

Hardest individual worker of all — and most beloved of the children — is Sister Melba Turner.

Sent up there with the backing of the Save the Children Fund, she has bought a house, furnished it delightfully, turned its biggest room into a clubroom for mixed blood girls and boys and for their mothers.

Postholes are being sunk in her front lawn right now to put up swings for the youngsters.

Daily she drives an almost defunct little car, laden with toys, one-third pint bottles of milk provided by the State, apples bought cheaply wherever she can buy them, woollies and whatever garments or shoes or such things people have sent her, and she



Typical River Bank youngsters. Left: Fred Jackson, champion printer of all Mooropna district state school. Right: George Weston, one of a very big family.

small houses or multiple houses for them.

The Rodney Shire Council has already told the Government that it will hand over its 11 acres of land if the Government will find funds to put up necessary buildings.

● Get rid of these mixed bloods completely.

go out to the River Bank settlement to distribute these things and to gather up the very young youngsters, and to teach them how to play.

THERE are many suggestions for what MIGHT be done to help these River Bankers.

Here they are as I found them:

- Absorb them into the white community by giving them small or multiple houses in Shepparton and Mooropna.
- Build a kindergarten hut on the rubbish dump site to let Sister Turner and the nurses and the Church of Christ go properly to work.
- Settle these people permanently on the tip site; give them water; build

SO far all appeals for Governmental interest or help have failed, and the "new deal" committee of well-meaning Shepparton and Mooropna citizens is completely frustrated.

The Government could take it up as a challenging test case, switching its laws to do something for ALL the mixed bloods in whom the Aborigines' Protection Board takes no interest.

Or Shepparton and Mooropna people could make the rubbish tip site a permanent home.

Rodney Shire Council has offered the land. It could find another rubbish tip site.

Above all else, a little human tolerance is needed.