

'We face race hatred here'

— **DR COOMBS**

CANBERRA. — Failure to face the problem of aboriginal education could result in race violence and hatred in Australia, Dr H. C. Coombs warned today.

Dr Coombs, chairman of the Australian Council of Aboriginal Affairs said that aboriginals of all ages lagged far behind their white peers in educational standards reached.

Dr Coombs told the Australian College of Education annual conference in Canberra:

"After 170 odd years of decline the aboriginal population is now rising rapidly and a failure to solve the educational and other problems of their place in our society could mean that the fond illusion many of us hold of Australia as homogenous and free of 'race' problems could be dissipated in violence and hatred."

Dr Coombs said the Australian College of Education should appoint a standing committee to collaborate with Government and other authorities in the study of the problems of aboriginal education.

If the college was the conscience of those concerned with education then the present state of aboriginal education was an affront to that conscience, he said.

PRIORITY

The college should also invite the newly-established advisory committee on educational research to give priority to a systematic analysis of these problems.

Dr Coombs said that about 50 per cent of aboriginals were under the age of 15 and close to half of these in many communities were under five.

"Although there are some signs of increasing progress into if not through secondary school, the dead weight of educational failure will continue to bear heavily on Australian society and younger aboriginals for decades to come," he said.

Dr Coombs said the rea-

sons for poor aboriginal educational performances were poor health, language difficulties, poverty of environment and inadequate motivation.

"There is a desperate need for research in the Australian context into all these problems.

"I believe the educational profession itself can be expected to demonstrate effective concern with them, increasing our understanding of them and advising on means to their solution," he said.



DR COOMBS

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