

Unions 'ignore native workers'

AUSTRALIAN unions were accused yesterday of paying only "lip service" to aboriginal rights.

The attack came from nine aboriginal leaders who met ACTU executive members.

Mr Jack Davis, of Perth, said the ACTU and unions had done nothing to help aboriginal workers.

Aboriginal seasonal workers throughout Australia were ignored by the unions, particularly the Australian Workers' Union, he said.

"Our workers are usually left to sleep under the stars. If they were white workers, the unions would insist on full accommodation," Mr Davis said.

He said these included fruit workers in Victoria, grape workers in WA and SA and cotton workers in NSW.

Mr Davis, who is editor of Identity, an aboriginal affairs magazine, said union officials should make greater contact with aboriginal workers.

Asked if aboriginals were bitter about union neglect while the ACTU banned South African sporting teams, he said:

"Not bitter, but disappointed. We told the ACTU that if you can do that against South Africans you can surely help us."

The ACTU president, Mr Hawke, said: "We called the meeting because we know more should be done."

Unions are 'no different'

"The union movement is no different from any other section of the Australian community.

"No section can be proud of the state of the aboriginal people in 1973."

The ACTU was likely to press for increased employment of aboriginals in government departments such as Labor and Social Services, Mr Hawke said.

"It would be much better if aboriginal people seeking help from these departments could deal with aboriginal officers," he said.

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