

Aborigines in China look at communes

From MARGARET JONES, Staff Correspondent

PEKING, Sunday. — A group of Australian Aborigines touring China is studying the possibility of setting up Chinese-style communes in Australia, particularly in NSW and Queensland.

The group wants to look also at autonomous regions for minority peoples, set up by the Chinese Government, to see whether they offer another possible solution to the problems of Aborigines.

The group, which arrived in Peking yesterday and will spend a week there, has already visited Canton, Shanghai, Wusih and Nanking on a five-week, expenses-paid visit at the invitation of China Peoples' Association for Friendship with Foreign countries.

It is the second Aboriginal delegation to visit China — the first was in 1972.

The eleven members in the group represent a wide cross-section of Aboriginal people, ranging from urban, part-Aboriginal radicals to tribal people from the Northern Territory.

Mr Gary Foley, the group's leader and a former race relations officer at Monash University, said he was most impressed with the commune idea which was particularly applicable to the Aboriginal situation in Australia.

"The Aboriginal society is already semi-socialist, and the commune system should work well for detribalised Aborigines in New South

Wales and Queensland," he said.

"The situation in Queensland, where there already exist large autonomous reserves, would be very well suited for conversion to communes run by Aborigines."

Mr Foley said that when the group returned to Australia he would do more study and report on this concept.

After its Peking stay, the group hopes to visit one of the national minority areas in Southern China. These autonomous regions, set up by the Chinese leadership for minority peoples, have an obvious interest for Australian Aborigines.

Mr Foley said another "most impressive aspect of Chinese life was the Workers' and Childrens' Palaces in Shanghai. These are multi-storey buildings in which all sorts of cultural and educational activities are combined with facilities for sports and entertainment.

"These palaces could be adapted very well to the needs of urban Aborigines in Australia," Mr Foley said.

"They would provide urban Aborigines with centres where their own culture could be preserved and where they could regain self respect and sense of identity."