

ATTEMPT TO MOVE ABORIGINES

Aldermen Protest

Declaring that aborigines should be treated as humans, not as pariahs, Ald. Higgins protested to Greater Newcastle Council last night against the action of the Chief Health Inspector (Mr. Meddows), in endeavouring to have aboriginal families on Platt's Estate removed before informing the council.

Mr. Meddows, who told the council the conditions in which the aborigines lived were well below the standard of a fifth or sixth rate country town, had requested the Land Board to take action to have the natives removed. His action was endorsed by the Health Committee in its recommendation.

Ald. Higgins thought that if the premises were in an unsatisfactory condition notices should be served on the inhabitants, and a further inspection made to see if they had been improved. He moved an amendment that this procedure should be adopted, and the request to the Land Board withdrawn.

The amendment was defeated. The Chairman of the Health Committee (Ald. Jenner) said the committee would make an inspection.

Ald. Higgins said he had had a good deal of experience with aborigines. They had as much right to decent conditions as white men. Some of the aborigines were in industry.

Ald. Richardson and Stevenson supported Ald. Higgins.

Ald. Young: A few years ago we made no bones about clearing people off Nobbys Camp and they were white people.

Resembles Nobbys

Mr. Meddows said he had considerable experience with aborigines with the Aborigines' Protection Board in Lismore, where aboriginal camps had been a "headache" for Lismore Council.

"I think I would have brought a storm about my ears when the encampment grew, and it will grow, if I had not taken action," he said. "Parts of Platt's Estate resemble Nobbys Camp, and it took four or five years to get that cleaned up."

Ald. Stevenson: Leave the people alone; give them a chance.

Ald. Scott-Daisley: Why have a Health Inspector if we are going to let people live in filth and squalor?

The Mayor (Ald. Dunkley): The Local Government Act does not allow us to let these things go on. If we allow these slums to grow up they will be around our neck. The officer has done his duty.