

ABORIGINAL RELICS

Ethnologist Pleads for Protection

Legislation similar to the Flora and Fauna Acts should be introduced in Australia to provide penalties for people who damaged relics of Australia's old civilisation, said Mr. F. D. McCarthy, at a meeting at Newcastle City Hall last night, arranged by the Anthropological Society of New South Wales. Mr. McCarthy is ethnologist at the Australian Museum, Sydney.

Mr. McCarthy gave an address on the records of aboriginal civilisation in New South Wales, illustrating the extent to which they gave information to the scientist. There had been some controversy about whether rock engravings found in New South Wales were the work of the aboriginal race living now, but strong evidence that they were the work of the present Australian native was available.

Mr. McCarthy said there were 18 or 20 stone raisements in different parts of the State. These were thought at first to be put there by surveyors, but the surveyors built different types of cairns. Aboriginal stone heaps had a ceremonial significance.

Mr. W. Enright spoke in support of the plea that records of the old civilisation in Australia be preserved.

Mr. Croft, a Government Patrol Officer in New Guinea, said the biggest thing in the life of a native in some of the districts of New Guinea was fighting. When that was taken from him something had to be substituted. The Government had a big problem to solve there. The natives had some amusing customs. When some evil befell them they decided to determine the tribe or person responsible, using a picturesque method, for the purpose. They cooked ceremonially a small and large pieces of sweet potato, and the piece which was not cooked denoted the guilty tribe.

Wily old men were wont to take advantage of a tribe in this manner. They demonstratively extracted three or four small (and therefore well-cooked) pieces: then when the unlucky tribe's turn came they chose a large (and uncooked) lump. As further proof of the selected tribe's guilt they might cook some beans, which were expected to pop in the direction of the guilty party. When the beans shot in all directions it was easy to disregard all but those which took the right course.