



Support For Civilian Widows

Apex next tackled "Aid to Civilian Widows". The plight of these forgotten women, most with children deprived of the love and care of a father, was found to be alarming. Their pensions were pitiful and few could work and properly care for their young families.

The terms of reference were comprehensive. The Committee called for support for the local Association of Civilian Widows or where no organisation of this kind exists to take steps to form one, set up a free legal and advisory bureau, make personal contact with each member or prospective member of ACW, carry out service work as required, organise a central "Swap" shop and establish a trust fund. The fund was designed to provide immediate financial assistance in cases of distress, to provide loans on small interest-free repayment basis, to purchase items of furniture, clothing, bedding etc.. to provide outings and picnics for civilian widows and their children and cater for holidays. Finally Apex was to support or initiate approaches to State and Federal governments with a view to improving the conditions of the widows.

The idea of the young men of Apex assisting civilian widows caused a certain amount of levity at the Ballarat Convention. Neil Edwards of Zone 4 outlining the scheme said.

"You call on your widow with a prepared set of questions ..."

Interjector; "What questions?"

Neil took a look at his paper.

"Suppose we start with the second question".

Then it was down to serious business. Hurstville organised an Association of Civilian Widows (50 members), 25 members of the Perth club acted as foster fathers to the children of widows, Mildura called a public meeting which resulted in another branch, and over 1,000 widows were enrolled in NSW.

Western Australian clubs were particularly active in promoting, this national scheme and a state conference of widows was organised in Victoria. Before long the Civilian Widows' Association was a reality with branches in many Australian towns and cities.

Another community service was off and running.