

Wattie Creek elders go walkabout

Gurindjis speak of land rights



Greg Maccaulay, left, president of the Australian Union of Students, with Donald Nangiari and Vincent Lingiari in Melbourne yesterday.

No Gove appeal but new laws sought

Aboriginals at Gove in Arnhem Land have decided to seek land rights through changes in the law instead of appeals in the courts.

They decided this at a special meeting on Monday to hear a report from three representatives who went to Canberra last week for talks with the Prime Minister, Mr McMahon.

One of the representatives, Mr Wally Wulanybama, flew into Darwin after the meetings.

He said yesterday the Yirrkala people at Gove had decided not to appeal against a decision this month by Mr Justice Blackburn, of the Northern Territory Supreme Court.

'BLOODSHED'

Mr Justice Blackburn ruled against the Aboriginals in their claim to own the land and mineral rights at Gove, where Nabalco is mining bauxite under leases granted

by the Commonwealth.

In Adelaide yesterday an Aboriginal leader said there would be bloodshed on the Gove Peninsula if the Federal Government did not change laws which denied land rights to Aboriginals.

Mr J. G. Yunuping, secretary of the Aboriginal village council at Yirrkala Mission in Arnhem Land, said tribal elders had told young Aboriginals to "wait for justice from the white man's court."

"We did not get justice. The Aboriginals are very angry," Mr Yunupingu said.

"I do not blame Mr Justice Blackburn," Mr Yunupingu said. "I blame the law. We must go to the Government and get those laws changed."

"Then we will find a part of our case that was not heard properly and ask for another hearing."

Mr Yunupingu said the Yirrkala tribal elders were having talks with lawyers at the moment on this possibility.

"But while they are talking there will be more brawls at Gove," he said.

Two elders of the Gurindji tribe sat in a centrally-heated Melbourne hotel yesterday, shivering a little in spite of their new sheepskin-lined jackets and boots.

In the heat of their tribal land at Wattie Creek, in the Northern Territory, they're always barefoot and often topless.

The elder of the elders, the tribal chief, is Vincent Lingiari, aged, he believes, several years past 70.

The younger, "50 years and many more," is Donald Nangiari.

They are on a two-week tour of Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney to try to persuade anyone who will listen that 500 square miles of land at Wattie Creek are theirs by ancient right.

They claim the land does not belong to Vestey's, the British-owned meat combine, and they have no intention of moving to the government-built village at nearby Wave Hill.

The elders are accompanied by Melbourne-born Sister J. Calley, and Mr Alan Thorpe, 32, also of Melbourne.

During their week's stay in Melbourne they hope to speak to the Premier, Sir Henry Bolte and the president of the ACTU, Mr R. J. Hawke.