

AMONG THE LYRE BIRDS, A SIT-IN

ABORIGINALS in Victoria, and others interested in land rights for Aborigines, are moving in on Sherbrooke Forest, a beauty spot in the Dandenong Ranges only 27 miles from Melbourne.

A group of Aborigines will stake a claim and remain on it until the State and Federal Governments grant land rights or come to a suitable compromise.

The sit-in will start at 9 am on February 6.

Mr Lin Onus, of the Aborigines Advancement League, tells me the claim will be at a point between Kallista and Belgrave.

"We hope as many people as possible will sit in from time to time," he said.

"The general aim is to protest over the non-granting of land rights, but we also want to emphasise the need for action on leprosy, infant mortality, preservation of Aboriginal culture and other things."

Lin Onus and other supporters of the advancement league couldn't have chosen a spot more likely to attract public attention.

There are 1983 acres of permanent reserve in the forest, which is famous for its lyre birds. This is where Sir Robert Helpmann studied the lyre bird's dance for his famous ballet.

Lin Onus says the Aborigines should claim about 40 or 50 acres.

"But it's an offence to camp in Sherbrooke Forest," he said, "so it's possible that those who sit in at the claim will be liable to be fined should the authorities exert their powers."

"A fine of this type is likely to be \$5 to \$10. We hope we'll have a small fund going for any who might be fined."

"We mean business. For those people who want to come we suggest they bring food, eating utensils, changes of clothing, boots, sleeping bag or blankets and groundsheet."