

Watersiders' Gurindji move hailed

SYDNEY: The donation of \$10,000 by the Waterside Workers' Federation to the Gurindji Aborigines, of Wattle Creek, NT, and the associated Gurindji decision to use it to fence off the 500 square miles of tribal land they are demanding, together form the most significant development in the Gurindji people's struggle since they first walked off the job at Wave Hill station in May 1966.

This view was expressed to Tribune this week by Mrs. Jean Leu, secretary of the Gurindji Campaign in Sydney.

"To have full control of this land has been their dream ever since it was lost to the white man. Today Mick Rangiarri, one of the Gurindji representatives at present in Sydney, talks all the time of the meaning of this land to his people," she said.

"The gift of the WWF, when translated by the Gurindji into practical demarcation and occupation of the full area of land, will represent a big challenge to the Government, which has firmly refused to give the Gurindji ownership rights to the land.

"All those who have shown their sympathy to the land rights struggle should be vigilant against new Government manoeuvres even now. These may not take the form of direct confrontation, but may be intimidation of a less direct character. For example, although the Federal Government recently promised to pipe water from a new nearby bore to Wattle Creek, this might be indefinitely delayed at the whim of the Government."

Mr. Frank Hardy, founder of the Gurindji Committee in Sydney, said on Monday: "The link-up between the trade union movement and the Gurindji in such a practical way is epoch-making. This, and also the apparent break-through of the Roper River people on the proposed land lease, means that the land rights struggle spearheaded by the Gurindji is bearing fruit."

Press reports that morning had indicated a firm proposal by the Northern Territory Land Board to lease to Roper River Aborigines a large tract of "reserve" land for the purpose of running cattle.