

Government fears riots at Aboriginal demonstration

CANBERRA. — Federal Ministers will hold an emergency meeting in Canberra today to discuss ways of avoiding a possible riot in support of Aboriginal land rights.

Hundreds of Aborigines and their supporters are planning a mass demonstration tomorrow on the site of the former Aboriginal "embassy" on the lawns opposite Parliament House.

The Minister for Aborigines (Mr. Howson) and the Minister for the Interior (Mr. Hunt) yesterday both appealed to Aborigines and their supporters to avoid any form of demonstration which could lead to violence.

Mr. Hunt said the Government would be prepared to consider making available either land, or a building, in Canberra where Aborigines "could establish a 'more dignified presence' than the former tent encampment known as the 'Aboriginal embassy'".

Nevertheless, Canberra police last night were reported to be preparing for a mass rally on the "embassy" site.

They had been instructed to prevent any attempt to re-erect the tent.

Aboriginal leaders have threatened to make another bid to

establish the "embassy" tomorrow.

Some trade unions have promised the support of "battle-hardened" workers.

Mr. Hunt had talks with leaders of the students and Aborigines in Canberra last Wednesday.

He said in Darwin yesterday that all of those present wanted to avoid violence at tomorrow's demonstration.

However, the establishment of tents by any pressure group on the lawns opposite Parliament

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House was an infringement of the law.

He said the Government would consider any approach by a nationally representative group to establish "a more dignified presence" for Aborigines in Canberra.

However, he said, such a "facility" could not be established until a genuinely representative body was set up to devise the plans of their people.

Mr. Hunt and Mr. Howson said they would take up at today's meeting of Federal Ministers, "arrangements for discussions

with Aboriginal organisations to ensure more effective consultation between the Government and Aborigines."

They said no arrangements in this respect would be made by the Government until the views were made known of the Conference of Official Advisory Councils on Aboriginal Affairs from the States and the Northern Territory, to be held in Canberra on August 10 and 11.

The Ministers said they were prepared to meet today in Canberra with the organisers of the proposed demonstration to explain the Government's position.

The Federal Opposition Leader

(Mr. Whitlam) yesterday made a strong appeal for non-violence at the big Aboriginal demonstration planned for tomorrow.

"Violence could only divert attention and sympathy for the central issue — the recognition of land and mineral rights for Aborigines," Mr. Whitlam said.

"The discipline and single-mindedness shown by those who manned the embassy for six months should be the model for Sunday's participants.

"The strength of the Aboriginal case and the weakness of the Government's is the dignity and discipline shown over the past month."