

Book could lead to poll issue

CANBERRA, Sun.—A book by Stewart Harris, Australian correspondent of *The Times*, could make a Federal election issue out of Aboriginal rights—particularly land rights.

The book, "This Our Land," will be published tomorrow. It strongly criticises the Federal Government's attitude to Aboriginal affairs.

The Leader of the Federal Opposition, Mr Whitlam, has agreed to speak at a function in Canberra today to launch the book. He is expected to repeat his promise of land rights for Aborigines under a Labor government.

In the book, Mr Harris criticises the Prime Minister, Mr McMahon, and the former Prime Minister, Mr Gorton. But his strongest criticism is of Country Party Ministers in the Federal Government.

WENTWORTH

"Gorton began well by appointing as Minister in charge of Aboriginal affairs his friend, William Wentworth, who had for many years been genuinely interested in Aborigines," he writes.

"Then perhaps because it was still very small, he doubled the vote for Aboriginal development from \$5 million to \$10 million.

"After that he lost interest, except to have his photo taken dancing with an Aboriginal debutante at a ball in Sydney on National Aborigines Day."

He says that Mr McMahon has done more for Aborigines than any previous Prime Minister but "in the context of their need nothing like enough."

He says of Mr McMahon: "He has not had the will to overcome the meanness and ignorance of his Country Party colleagues in Cabinet."

FAILURE

Mr Harris describes as "incredible" the failure of Mr Gorton and Mr McMahon to heed the ad-

Council of Aboriginal Affairs, "the Government's own advisory body on Aboriginal policy."

He writes: "It would, of course, be incorrect to blame the Country Party for all conservative attitudes towards Aborigines.

"Nonetheless, the Country Party remains the main brake on Aboriginal advancement.

"Country Party arguments are the classic ones of conservative property owners throughout history. They also contradict policies of other enlightened Western countries and of the Government's own skilful, specialist advisers, who have nothing political at stake."

RADICALS

In a passage near the end of the book, he says: "It seems to me that a good deal of the discussion about violent elements consorting with Aboriginal radicals is not unlike the traditional conservative talk within Australia of Chinese Communism coming south.

"It is meant to stifle change and keep Australia conforming. It is meant to kill Aboriginal integrity or the development of groups going back to the strength of their dreamtime."