

MELBOURNE "AGE"
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The unshakeable black conscience

From JANET HAWLEY,
in Sydney

LEADERS of the Aboriginal Movement have been told that the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, held a meeting three weeks ago to discuss ways of neutralising the effect of the Aborigines on CHOGM — in particular the activities of Mr Gary Foley.

Aborigines also say that two weeks ago, two Commonwealth police visited the Aboriginal Legal Service in Sydney and, with amazingly deft finesse, asked whether Mr Foley planned any assassinations during CHOGM?

They add that on Tuesday two Victorian police visited Mr Foley's office of the Aboriginal Health Service in Fitzroy and asked what the blacks planned to get up to during CHOGM.

In the past month they say the telephones and telexes at the Sydney and Melbourne Aboriginal Health Services which, like all Aboriginal health services, have widened into political and resource centres, have mysteriously gone out of order then began to work again.

"We know our phones are tapped and some of us are under surveillance," said Mr Foley. "If I was them I suppose I'd have me under surveillance, but that doesn't mean I like it."

CHOGM — the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting — opens in Melbourne on Wednesday and Mr Foley and his Aboriginal strategists have become the black conscience that won't be shaken off Malcolm Fraser's back.

It has become a small war of tactics and intelligence — the Aborigines determined to have their problems well and truly raised, the Prime Minister determined to keep all dirty spots off the host's table cloth.

Vanuatu's Mr Walter Lini is being juggled by both sides, Mr Foley saying he will raise Aboriginal rights and a lot more, Mr Fraser saying no he won't, he's a good friend of mine, and Mr Foley countering, "he's a better friend of mine".

What is obvious is that the Aborigines are no longer the voiceless, political naives they were 13 years ago. Dr Anwar Barkat, the political scientist and head of the recent World Council of Churches tour, called Mr Foley a masterful organiser and natural leader. The head of the Foreign Affairs Department in Vanuatu told Mr Foley he was a most effective strategist. Blacks from other countries now come to him and his core group, to take lessons.

Mr Foley, aged 31, along with his colleague Bruce McGuinness, chairman of the VAAS has for 10 years been one of the main-



It is seen as a unique opportunity for the movement to establish world contacts

ABORIGINAL ACTIVIST GARY FOLEY

AND ITS UNSHAKEABLE FRIEND

MR WALTER LINI remains steadfast in his belief that the controversial World Council of Churches report on Tborigines should be raised at CHOGM.

To him, Aboriginal rights are "very much tied up with two things on the agenda: Human rights and the North-South dialogue."

The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth's newest member State, Vanuatu, has threatened the country's excellent relations by threatening to discuss the report.

"I cannot really see how the question of Aboriginal rights in Australia could not be raised," he told me.

We were talking in his austere office in the white Government building built by the former colonial powers on top of the hill overlooking Vila harbor.

stay group of Aboriginal activists. Good looking, strong, lithe, he wears city jeans, one silver ear ring, has a quick mind, quick tongue, flashing smile and flashing anger.

Some say Mr Foley should soften his approach. He is often labelled a militant, in Queensland a terrorist. But this way he's the spearhead people notice.

He said: "At Fraser's meeting, one suggestion was to get a 'tame' Aborigine to make a public attack on me, but they couldn't find anyone with enough prestige to do it."

"They've selected some nice little tame Aborigines in well-paid Government jobs to act as advisers to delegates during CHOGM. They'll be putting the Government line, and the mere fact they're Aborigines will give this credibility."

"A high official from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs,

He was clearly not impressed by the criticism from the chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, Mr Roger Shipton, who said that gratuitous advice by Mr Lini at CHOGM would jeopardise Australian aid to Vanuatu.

Mr Lini said: "If they (countries giving aid) tighten the screws and nuts and make us dance to their tune then we will be obliged to play our own tune and make our own dance."

"We believe very strongly that if we are going to be partners or friends or neighbors we should be so on the best possible terms rather than to be seen as being dragged along by Australia and despised by other Pacific States because Australia does not take into account views expressed by these States."

— GERRY CARMAN

who we regard as a racist and hatchet man, will also be an adviser at CHOGM.

"We don't plan to let Fraser get away with it. We'll be distributing background material on these 'advisers' to all delegates, forewarning them which Aborigines are Uncle Toms and which they can trust."

Mr Foley says no wild demonstrations are planned for CHOGM, rather the Aborigines will be using the occasion like diplomats. It is seen as an opportunity for the movement to establish world contacts, using the World Council of Churches report to generate interest.

The Aborigines have already sent the WCC report and other material to every participating country.

The Aborigines will obviously be looking to potential friends in black Africa, and expect about half to be sympathetic.

Aborigines from all States are arriving in Melbourne as well as a group of Maoris. Mr Foley said, "We expect Fraser to do a song and dance on Muldoon's head over the Springboks, and Muldoon will cite the Aborigines to criticise Fraser. We'll have the Maoris on board to pour it back on Muldoon."

The Aborigines see the Brisbane Commonwealth Games as the next opportunity to put their case, internationally.

"During CHOGM we'll be trying to ascertain what support we can get for a boycott or protests," said Mr Foley.

After CHOGM, Mr Foley will spend six months writing the history of the black movement in Australia.

Foley was born in Grafton and grew up in Tenterfield, NSW, also the home of Peter Allen. "I was a football star and a champion runner, and it gave me a sort of self-confidence a lot of other blacks don't have."

"We lived in a humpy and graduated to a house on the edge of town. My dad was an itinerant worker, and when I was 14 he went to Queensland. I'd already seen Queensland's way of treating blacks, and didn't want to go, so I went and lived with my grandmother on a settlement at Nambucca Heads till 1965, then I came to Sydney."

He became a qualified air-conditioning design draftsman, a skill he has never used.

In 1972 he was a co-founder of the Aboriginal Embassy. In 1973 he co-wrote and acted in the first Aboriginal stage production at Nimrod, 'Basically Black', and in 1974 was the leader of an Aboriginal delegation to China.

He worked for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Canberra, was sacked after six weeks, then moved to Sydney to take up a position with the Aboriginal Medical Service.

He co-directed the Aboriginal film, 'Backroads' with Phil Noyce, then taught at Swinburne College in the Community Organisation Course for Aborigines for two years "till the Government closed it down as they reckoned we were too radical". In 1978 he was with a group who took 13 films on Black Australia to the Cannes Film Festival, then to Germany and England.

"I realised we should be trying to develop international links, so in 1979 I went back to England and helped set up Aboriginal Information Centres there and in Europe."

Mr Foley was in Sydney this week to complain to the Australian Council of Churches. One of the major recommendations of the WCC report was that the Australian churches should make a significant gesture and hand back some land to Aborigines.

"Not one of them has yet moved to give back one inch, and it's irking us," he said.