

## ABORIGINAL STRIKERS IN WA SEIZED AT REVOLVER POINT, PUT IN CHAINS

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While Dr. Evatt used UNO to attack the People's Democracies for dealing out justice to traitors, Australian Aborigines have been put in chains for the "crime" of agitating for better working conditions.

For the "crime" of inducing their fellows to leave the slave conditions of the stations. 30 Aborigines were recently arrested at revolver point and clamped in chains to be carted off to the Marble Bar jail, Western Australia.

This is revealed in a letter to the Perth Workers' Star from Don McLeod, leading white activist in the struggle of the Aborigines against oppression and slavery.

The natives protested against the brandishing of revolvers, and the policy tried to pass it off by joking about it, Mr. McLeod writes.

Under the Native Administration Act, any member of the public is entitled to give evidence on behalf of natives.

But at the trial in Marble Bar, the magistrate, Mr. Hogg, R.M., refused the accused's request that Don McLeod conduct their case. The request was put into writing. He still refused.

A lawyer was then contacted in Perth. He agreed to take their case. The magistrate refused.

The trial proceeded, with Native Affairs Dept., Inspector O'Neil "defending" the native workers.

In protest, the accused men refused to answer questions.

Twenty-nine were sentenced to two months' hard labor and organiser Punch to three.

After all this, the magistrate made the astonishing remark that the lightness of the sentences was no sign of weakness.

Previously, 13 other native workers were imprisoned, 12 for two months, one, Jackson, for three months.

This occurred when the manager of Corunna Downs station "Induced" a member of the Co-op to return to work on the station, Mr. McLeod writes.

He sent to the Mooiyalla Co-operative Camp for moral support. Ten of his mates went out to see him.

They were all arrested on charges of "enticing a native from his place of employment."

When the news of the arrests reached the Co-operative Camp, parties of Aborigines left the camp to visit nearby stations and pull out the workers there.

The police then made more arrests, and jailings followed.

Like workers everywhere, the Aborigines hit back with a wide strike movement, which is still spreading.

McLarty's squatter Government and police retaliated with the next lot of jailings.

Mr. McLeod reports that more can be expected unless wide protest are organised from the trade unions and democratic movements to stay McLarty's hand.

McLarty's scheme is obviously to put all the able-bodied producers of the Co-op in jail and smash it economically so members will be faced with the alternative of starvation or return to slavery on the stations. Already they have the added burden of supporting the dependants of the 43 jailed members.

The "Liberal" Government's first attack was on the natives' base village and school at the 12-mile Port Hedland, where the co-op movement started in 1946.

Native Affairs Dept. gave members till February 28 last to get out, but, refusing to shift, and by threatening a strike of all members still working on the stations (some had gone back at improved wages and conditions won by the strike) they forced the Government to retreat.

The cowardly and despicable action in threatening their base village and school aroused wide resentment and the following letter was sent to Minister Native Affairs Ross McDonald by Don McLeod:

Dear Mr. McDonald,

I am asked to forward to you advice of the following matters agreed on in general discussion by the members of the NW Workers' Co-op., viz:

Despite three years of orderly negotiations in accordance with advice from Don McLeod, we are no further advanced in our attempt to secure our right to a real advance towards citizenship.

Since the foundation of the colony our people have had to endure the effects of slow starvation, exposure and extreme exploitation, yet, when we attempt to ??? to such practices we are ??? a deliberate provocative ??? carried out by the police as others of your department, obviously with the intention of intimidating us.

This campaign has culminated in the attempted breaking up of the strike camp at 12-mile (Port Hedland) by declaring it a "Prohibited Area" under the Act as from February 28.

It is clear that our orderliness has been interpreted by you as a sign of weakness and it is our intention to disregard the whole of this Act ??? in any case we are advised that it is unconstitutional in so far as it conflicts with the Anti-Slavery Act of 1843 passed by the Imperial Parliament.

Under this Act not only were the slaves freed throughout the British Empire, but a guarantee was given that never again would slavery be allowed through the Empire.

We are forced to take note that the policy of your Act and ??? Acts throughout the Commonwealth have had the effect of slowly murdering seven-eighths of the pre-British inhabitants of Australia during a period when the non-coloured people increased to almost or over seven millions.

This policy and the sorrow it caused was merely to provide some monetary gain to that small clique who have secured the vested interest in cheap native labor built up by the various native Acts throughout the Commonwealth.

In the interest of our people we demand a halt to these persecutions. We adopt this policy now while we have the power with which several hundred of our people organised in their own defence endows us, and we will be supported by an overwhelming majority of the people, particularly the organised workers, to whom it is our intention to appeal for support.

We will continue this struggle until our people throughout the Commonwealth are granted equal citizenship.

Should your department attempt to use force to re-enact the condition we object to, we will hold you responsible for any unforeseen incidence which may occur.