

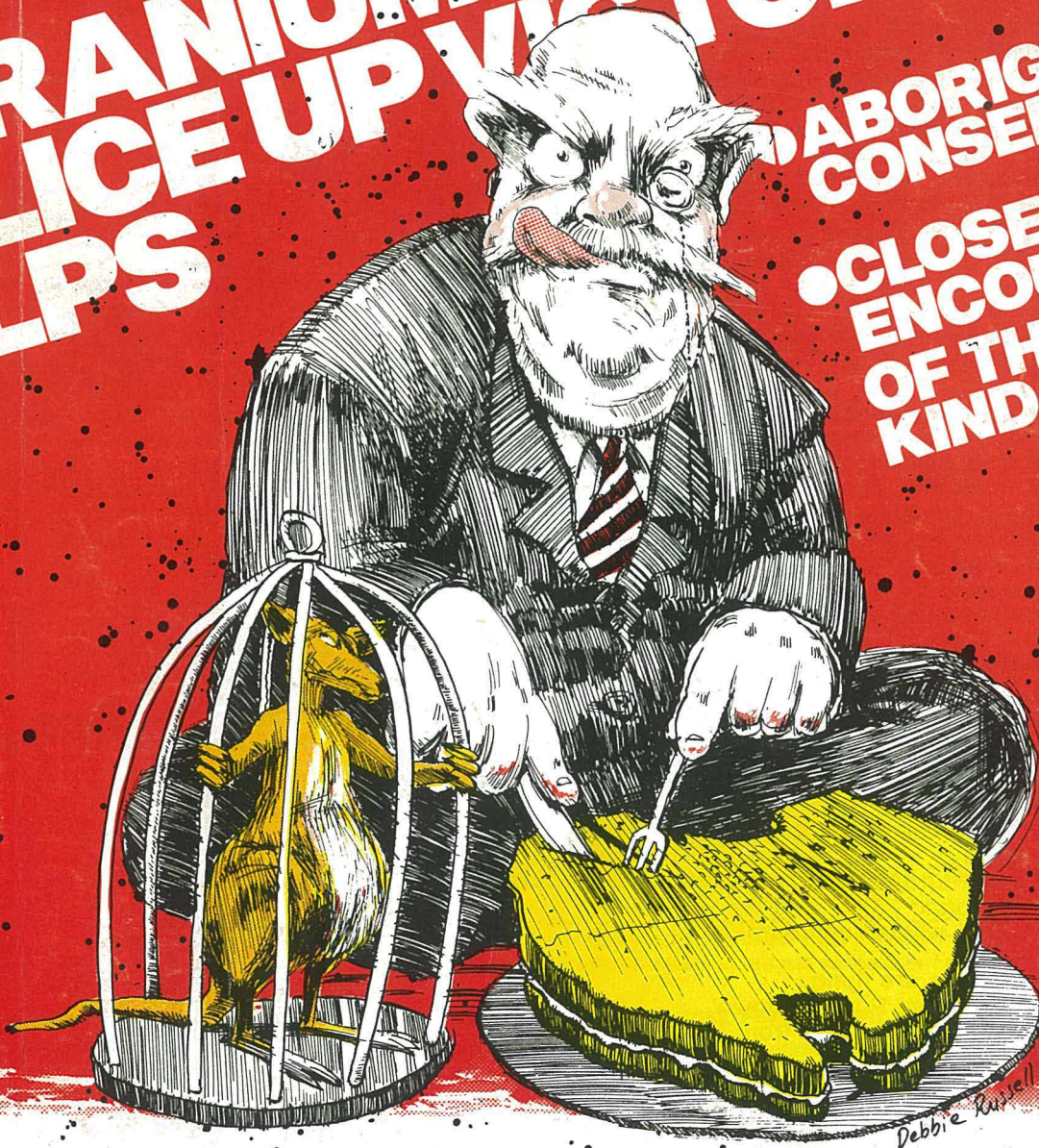
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH'S

# CHAIN REACTION

URANIUM MINERS  
SLICE UP VICTORIAN  
ALPS

• ABORIGINES &  
CONSERVATION

• CLOSE  
ENCOUNTERS  
OF THE WORST  
KIND



VOL. 4 NO. 1 1978 \$1

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For over a century aborigines have progressively been driven off their territory as white farmers and miners moved onto the land. The black people were forced to camp around mission stations, or in humpies on the outskirts of towns. As their traditional lifestyle broke down the people became demoralised. They were ravaged by disease, alcohol, and frequently, white brutality.

Since the Land Rights Act was passed in 1976 traditional aboriginal "landowners" have had the right to claim Crown Land in the Northern Territory. The claims involve long, expensive court cases. So far only three cases have been heard. The experience gained during these cases has shown the importance of supporting the aboriginal claims.

In the past conservationists, especially in the United States, have been somewhat insensitive to the rights of native people. While glorifying their subsistence lifestyles, their respect for nature and their myths, conservationists have done virtually nothing to help native people under threat. The article "Can Indians and Environmentalists find Common Ground?" (p25) describes an alliance between American Indians and environmentalists, to fight a planned coalmining project. The question it raises is: will the environmentalist support the Indians when they claim land which is now a national park?

The article by Patricia Turner Kamara (p27) expresses the bitterness of aborigines who constantly have to justify their claims for land and prove that they are capable of looking after it.

In Australia some conservationists have been worried that aborigines who have been introduced to guns, cars and alcohol will not treat the land with the same respect they have shown it in the past; however Richard Graves points out that most of these fears grow out of ignorance (see p18). Even with cars and rifles there is no evidence that aborigines kill more than they did with traditional

weapons, or that they kill for killing's sake. Aboriginal hunting practices help to maintain the ecological balance in some areas: burning the bush to drive out game leads to regrowth which is essential for some species' survival and aborigines still hunt pests such as rabbits, wild pigs, buffalo and feral cats.

Certain members of the anti-uranium movement have criticised the Northern Land Council for negotiating with uranium mining companies. In reply the Central Land Council pointed out that conservationists have failed "to give Aboriginal people the information and assistance they need to make informed decisions" and add that the Aboriginal Land Councils have been given no legal choice but to negotiate; this applies to manganese, oil and other substances, not just uranium (see p35).

Environmentalists must also consider what happens to Crown land not granted to aborigines. Usually it is leased to mining or pastoral interests. Even if made into a national park, the cost of patrolling the enormous areas involved to prevent illegal hunting is more than governments are prepared to pay. The Federal Government can permit mining inside national parks simply by issuing a proclamation. Woodchipping has been going on for years inside proposed park areas.

Aborigines will need all the help they can get to win worthwhile areas of land. Blanket expressions of sympathy are of little use. Environmentalists could be more helpful by studying modern-day aboriginal hunting or land-use practices and providing expert evidence in court cases. All existing evidence suggests that aborigines are responsible land-users.

Friends of the Earth urge everyone interested in conservation to support aboriginal land rights. We share with the aboriginal people a love for the Australian countryside, and think that they have a right to own land without strings attached.

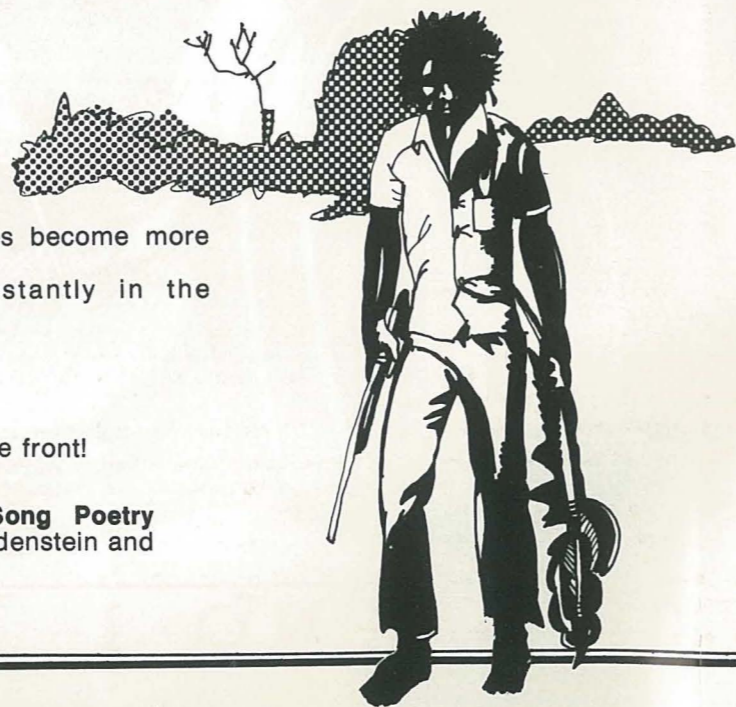
LIGHTNING

Far away it rises  
with its contours a whitish strip  
and its base growing bigger  
it banks up in the sky

While in the front the edges become more  
marked  
new shapes form constantly in the  
background  
under whitish contours

Flickering flashes are flung  
Rain front come on! Pouring down  
evermore thicker through from the front!  
Frightening

—From **Taruru: Aboriginal Song Poetry**  
**From The Pilbara** C. G. von Brandenstein and  
A. P. Thomas Rigby Adelaide.



EARTH NEWS page 2

Rolf Hiemann sentenced over nuclear submarine demonstration; 2-4-5-T; Record smog descends on Melbourne; Tasmania's last wild river is threatened.

ENERGY NEWS page 7

For less than the cost of one nuclear reactor solar batteries could be mass-produced now; Simon Thornton offers an amazing, free, low-energy housing advisory service.

OCEANS NEWS page 9

Are the Russians deceiving the FAO about fish catches? Will foreign fleets be allowed into Australian off-shore waters to hunt whales?

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE WORST KIND page 11

by Andrew Herington  
Nuclear satellite accidents have been described by the US National Security adviser as "almost close to totally unlikely". However several accidents have occurred, the last scattering 100 lb of highly enriched uranium through the atmosphere. This article is a must for paranoid readers.

URANIUM AT MANSFIELD page 13

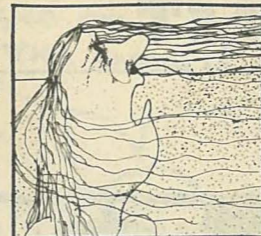
by Cris Hattersley  
While conservationists campaigned for an Alpine National Park near Mansfield the prospectors were not idle. Urangesellschaft has discovered uranium in Victoria.

CHAIN REACTION INTERVIEW: GALARRWUY YUNUPINGU page 16

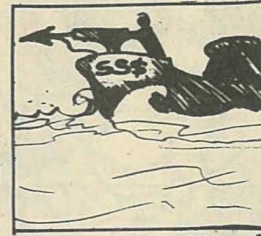
by Nina Claditz  
Galarrwuy Yunupingu, chairman of the Northern Land Council, is obliged to negotiate with the uranium companies who plan to mine uranium on aboriginal land. In this interview he talks about uranium mining, racism and the role of the churches.

ABORIGINES AS CONSERVATIONISTS page 18

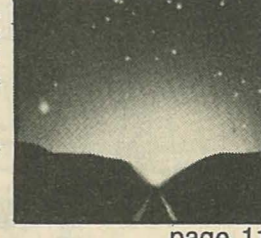
by Richard Graves  
Aboriginal hunting practices once played an important part in maintaining the ecological balance. Richard Graves suggests that despite the introduction of Western technology the aborigines still have an important role in conservation.



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BORROLOOLA: PEOPLE IN CRISIS page 21

by Peter Burgoyne  
The Borroloola people of the Northern Territory have in theory won land rights. However their healthy culture and spiritual bond to the land is threatened by a mining project.

CAN INDIANS AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS FIND COMMON GROUND? page 25

by David Zimmerman  
Environmentalists and North Cheyenne Indians have formed an alliance to fight against strip mining in the Northern Great plains of the USA. However the alliance could crumble when Indians claim national park land nearby.

THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE page 29

by Pat Turner  
Pat Turner Kamara, former vice-president of FCAATSI, a national aboriginal organisation, points out similarities between the American Indians' position and the plight of aborigines. She asks for unconditional support for land rights.

AURUKUN page 29

by Lyndon Shea  
Despite volumes of hot air from the direction of Canberra, Aurukun and Mornington Island have been taken over by the Queensland Government. Queensland's repressive treatment of blacks is revealed.

KAKADU: WHERE LAWS FALL DOWN page 33

by John Hallam  
The recent "environment protection" legislation for the Kakadu National Park does not contain any specific regulations to protect the area. Secrecy provisions in the legislation make it virtually impossible for the public to find out when uranium miners in the region break nuclear safety codes, and the park is no nearer to being proclaimed.

LETTERS page 36

Ecofeminism; the China Debate; embarrassing cartoons.

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COMIC STRIP — Inside back cover  
Lang/Hancock versus the ECONUTS!

Chain Reaction is the quarterly magazine of Friends of the Earth Australia, publishing feature articles and news on national and international environmental issues. Opinions expressed in Chain Reaction are not necessarily Friends of the Earth policy. Letters and contributions are welcome.

Send correspondence to: Chain Reaction, 51 Nicholson Street, Carlton, 3052. Phone (03) 347 6788.

This issue was written and edited by Cris Hattersley, Peter Burgoyne, Barbara Hutton, Andrew Herington, Richard Graves, Jack Gilding, Rod Roberts, Simon Thornton, John Hallam, Brian Appleford, Pat Turner Kamara, Di Elliffe, Mike Russo, David Zimmerman and others.

Layout: Mark Carter and Michael Russo.

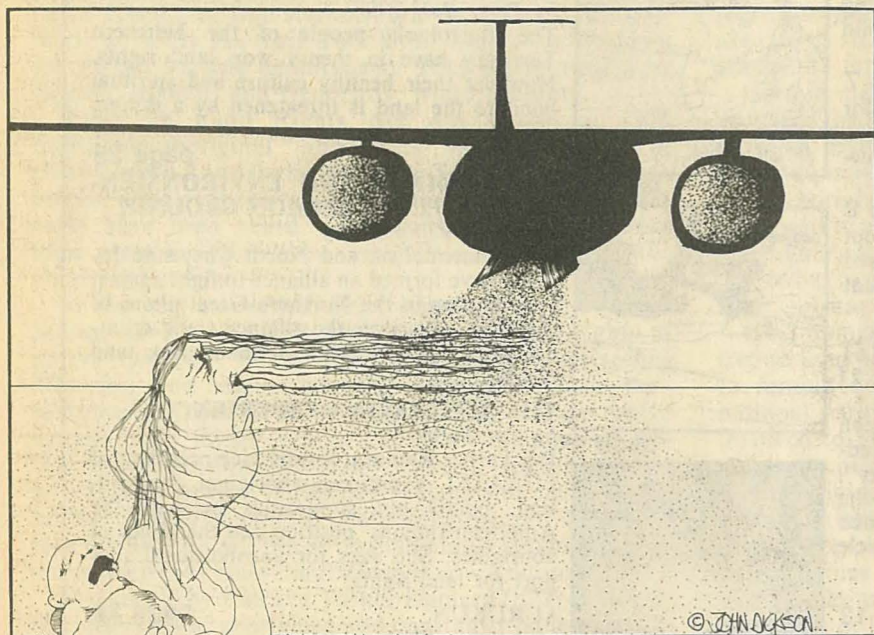
Graphics: Mark Carter (maps), Michael Vale (comic strip), Mike Russo, Jill Anderson, John Dickson, Liz Honey, Rolf Heimann (cartoons), Debbie Russell (front cover).

Photos: Northern Land Council, Paul Dickenson, "Touch the Earth" (T. C. McLuhan). Sphere Books, London 1973.





## Birth defects and 2,4,5T



Between June 1975 and May 1976 there were 93 births in the small Gippsland town of Yarram. Three had serious congenital neural tube defects, either spina bifida or exencephaly. Spina bifida is an incomplete development of the spine causing paralysis and malformation, usually of the lower limbs, and death in many cases. In the case of exencephaly the baby is born with no brain at all. In both cases the odds of this occurring are approximately one in a thousand births under normal circumstances. However in Yarram the circumstances were far from normal. In all cases during pregnancy, Yarram had been subjected to a heavy barrage of herbicides. One of those herbicides was 2,4,5-T.

2,4,5-T is a widely used selective weed killer which is severely restricted in the U.S. and Sweden. The harmful effects of this herbicide were first brought to worldwide attention during the Vietnam war. There were reports of an alarming

increase of birth defects in areas subjected to the U.S. defoliation program known as "Operation Hades". Hospitals in Saigon reported the common occurrence of a new phenomena described as an "egg bundle-like foetus". Unfortunately, owing to the general shambles of war, useful statistics on birth defects are virtually impossible to come by. The South Vietnamese authorities went as far as to declare information on the subject "classified". "Operation Hades" was mainly intended to deprive Vietnamese guerillas of cover by killing the trees in vast areas of jungle. Altogether some 12% of the total land area of South Vietnam was sprayed. By far the major herbicide in use was known as "Agent Orange", a 50:50 mixture of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D. Some 40,000 tons of "Agent Orange" were sprayed on South Vietnam in total.

2,4,5-T contains minute quantities of an impurity known as dioxin which is created during the manufacturing process. Dioxin is an extremely toxic substance. New Zealand authorities estimate that only 8 millionths of a gram are required to produce birth defects in humans. The potency of dioxin was dramatically

illustrated following an industrial accident in a chemical plant in the northern Italian town of Seveso on July 10, 1976. Five pounds of dioxin were released into the atmosphere. An area of roughly 400 hectares was immediately contaminated and the town of Seveso (pop. 17,000) was evacuated. 12,000 animal deaths were recorded. Entire crops had to be destroyed. There were 70 miscarriages. Eighty abortions were carried out for fear of deformities, and even so 15 babies were later born with deformities. Within the first month after the accident 500 people were treated for skin rashes and liver and kidney disorders.

### The Waikato Tragedy

New Zealand in the past few years has produced a spate of 2,4,5-T-related incidents. The following is quoted from a Queensland Conservation Council Subcommittee report of an incident in 1972: "In the Waikato district of New Zealand, two babies were born within a month of each other with congenital defects which prevented life. The mothers were neighbours on adjoining farms, both of which had been sprayed with 2,4,5-T during the first three months of the two pregnancies. Both farms obtained their water from roof catchments, which could contain any 2,4,5-T which had strayed onto roofs. A third neighbour also on an adjoining farm which was sprayed at the same time but which drew its water from an underground well gave birth to a healthy child."

2,4,5-T had yet to finish its tragic involvement with the Waikato district. In the space of one month, between December 27, 1975 and January 26, 1976, eight babies were born in the district, with neural tube defects. Six of the babies had spina bifida and two had exencephaly. The district would normally produce slightly less than one neural tube defect per month on average. The use of 2,4,5-T is widespread in the district.

Another case study in New Zealand, which is even more difficult to rationalise away occurred in the little town of Opanaki. In 1974 two women gave birth to babies with exencephaly. In 1976 there were two more cases of exencephaly. Three of the four cases came from the same street and the other from another street only a few hundred yards away. A New Zealand health official ruled out 2,4,5-T involvement even though the houses were only a few hundred yards away from paddocks subject to 2,4,5-T spraying.

The concentration of dioxin in 2,4,5-T is theoretically limited by regulation, to 0.1 parts per million. However this is not always the case. The dioxin levels in formulated imports are not measured. (In a formulated product the herbicide is already mixed with other chemical components to make up the final product.) Furthermore, research suggests that dioxin levels may be increased by heat, such as can be found in store sheds and during bushfires. Recently the Victorian MLA, Ian Cathie, revealed that 38% of the 2,4,5-T tested by the Lands Department exceeded the "safe" dioxin level of 0.1 parts per million. Add to this the fact that only one type of dioxin is tested for. There are many other forms of dioxin apart from 2,3,7,8-TCCD which is the type tested for.

The problem, however, does not rest solely with dioxin. Research by the U.S. Environment Protection Agency implicates 2,4,5-T itself. "Findings of birth defects and cancerous tumours amongst laboratory animals exposed to 2,4,5-T indicated that it may cause the same problems amongst people."

### "Wash out the container into a running stream"

The World Health Organisation in 1975 recommended the following to 2,4,5-T users, on the disposal of containers: "Container must either be burned or crushed and buried below topsoil. Care must be taken to avoid subsequent contamination of water sources. Decontaminated containers should not be used for food and drink." Australian authorities seem



to take a somewhat less cautious attitude. The following is a recommendation from the NSW Forestry Commission on the handling of 2,4,5-T: "No damage to stock or other fauna should result if empty spray tank is washed out into a running stream" ... "humans could drink with safety water from a tanker which had previously contained spray solution provided that it had been flushed through with clean water."

The aerial spraying of 2,4,5-T has for a long time been abandoned in Sweden and the U.S., but not in Australia. The NSW Government introduced an aerial spraying control act in 1969. Nine years later the legislation has still not been implemented, despite the heavy increase in aerial spraying.

In a recent television documentary series (Four Corners) it was revealed that there are at least ten chemical herbicides and pesticides which are banned or severely restricted in the U.S., yet they are exported to Australia and are freely available. 2,4,5-T has been withdrawn from the U.S. market pending research and has been banned altogether in Britain. In Victoria there has been a 12-member committee set up to investigate claims that 2,4,5-T caused birth abnormalities in Yarram. However at the time of writing 2,4,5-T is still freely available.

The attitude taken by authorities in this area is even more disturbing. Dr. E. J. Fitzsimons of the National Health and Medical Research Council (N.H.M.R.C.), chairs the two sub-committees responsible for approving herbicides and pesticides for use in Australia. He was recently interviewed on "Four Corners". The following is part of that interview.

Four Corners: "The point with DBCP (a soil fumigant) is that it was only withdrawn after there were human casualties in 1977. Yet there had been similar casualties, (such as) sterility amongst laboratory animals in 1961. Laboratory animal tests had also shown that it could cause concern in 1973. In 1976 it had been shown to be mutagenic in laboratory animals. Do we have to wait for human casualties before we withdraw or hold back the product?"

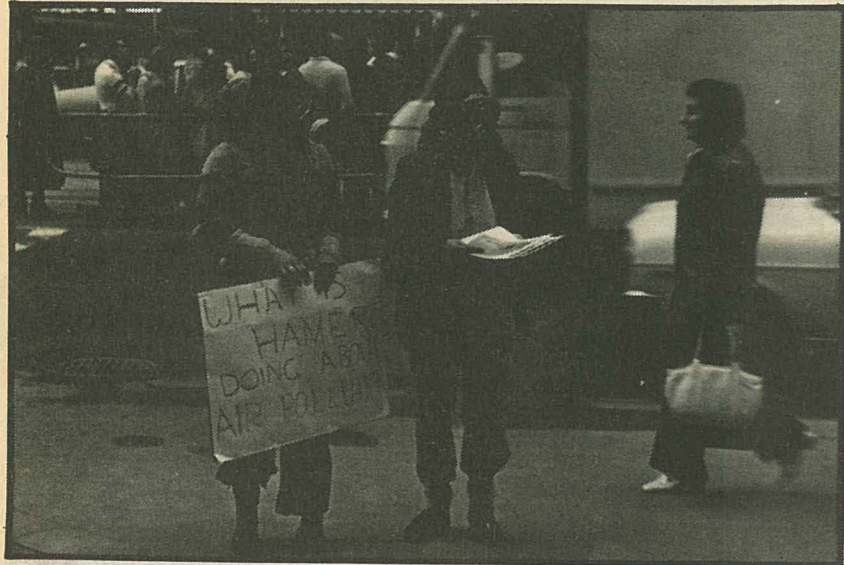
Dr. Fitzsimons: "Er... I can't see an alternative though can you?"

Friends of the Earth would appreciate assistance in this field be it with information, donations or physical help. Contact Rod, c/o Friends of the Earth, 51 Nicholson St., Carlton, 3053, or phone (03) 347 6630 and help stop the poisoning of children yet to be born.

References  
 "Four Corners" program on pesticides, broadcast in Melbourne on May 6, 1978.  
 "The Withering Rain" by Thomas Whiteside, E. P. Dutton & Co Inc, New York.  
 Queensland Conservation Council Subcommittee report "The use and effect of plant hormone pesticides (2,4-D and 2,4,5-T) in Australia" printed in "Operculum" 3 (5-6), Sept-Dec, 1973, pages 89-94.  
 "Environment News" Vol 2, No 1, page 23.  
 "The Australian" August 10, 1976  
 "Tribune" April 19, page 7.  
 "Tribune" May 10, page 3.



# Choking Smog 'speaks' to Melbourne



Equipped with gas masks to emphasise the severity of Melbourne's record smog levels, members of FOE Carlton protested outside the Melbourne Town Hall against the Victorian State Government's disastrous urban and transport planning (i.e. the construction of freeways and the down-grading of public transport), which is the major cause of the city's severe air pollution.

During the last two weeks of June, Melbourne's TV audiences were awestruck and bewildered by the breathtaking (quite literally) aerial views of the city smothered in a thick, grimy white layer of cloud. From Nicholson Street, outside FOE's Carlton office, looking directly south to just a half a mile away, the ghostly shapes of Melbourne's two towering skyscrapers, Collin's Place and Nauru House, were barely definable through the yellowish haze.

Melbourne was experiencing its worst ever smog conditions. Meanwhile, Victoria's Environment Protection Authority was in a cloud all of its own. The EPA was being beset with inquiries from the public and the press, but could only contribute to the prevailing confusion with vague and inaccurate descriptions of the severity of the air pollution.

Aft the first record breaking day of 7.7 on the pollution index, on Tuesday, June 20, an EPA spokesperson told the Melbourne

"Age" environment reporter, Jennifer Byrne, that the level was still comfortably below the "danger index" of 10. Exactly one week later, however, when this "danger index" was easily surpassed by a new record index level of 13.1, the EPA's chief air quality officer, Dr J.B. Robinson, was reported in the "Age" the next day quietly reassuring Melbourne that the pollution would not become dangerous until the index reached about 20. A rather disturbing discrepancy.

The EPA was also unable to supply any basic statistics as to why the pollution was suddenly so bad. It was unable or unwilling to provide information about how many more cars are entering the inner city because of the notorious F19 Freeway. Most people, including the authority, know that cars are primarily responsible for Melbourne's smog problem. Nitrogen dioxide (an acidic chemical), and carbon monoxide levels were about 7 times higher than average.

Making my own inquiries into the discrepancy in the reporting of the "danger index" levels, I was first informed by an EPA officer that he thought that perhaps 10 was the "long term" danger level, and 20 was the "short term" danger level. He admitted that he didn't really know much about these matters. However, I was later told by another officer that 20 was the danger level on the *pollution index*, and 10 the danger level on the *airborne particle indices*. These are the two air pollution measurements used by the authority.

While Melbourne was choking in its 13.1 smog (on the *pollution index*), Victoria's Minister for Conservation, Mr Borthwick was defending the Government's record on smog control. He said the Government's record "spoke for itself".

— Mike Russo



## BRILLIANTLY STUPID MISTAKE

There was a misprint in the last edition of Chain Reaction (3/4). In the article "Civil Liberties in a Nuclear State", non-violent civil disobedience was described as being, at times "foolhardy and politically stupid, at others brilliantly stupid".

This should read, "brilliantly successful". Anne Doble, who wrote the article, is actually in favor of civil disobedience.

# The Last Wild River

Unlike most of Australia, Tasmania is well endowed with water resources. Sitting in the path of the Roaring Forties it receives between 100" and 30" per annum.

With all that water about and a rugged terrain to boot it's little wonder that the State has a huge hydro-electric power potential. And it hasn't missed the opportunity to exploit any of it.

Since early this century the State has methodically dammed practically every river and raised the level of every sizeable lake on the island.

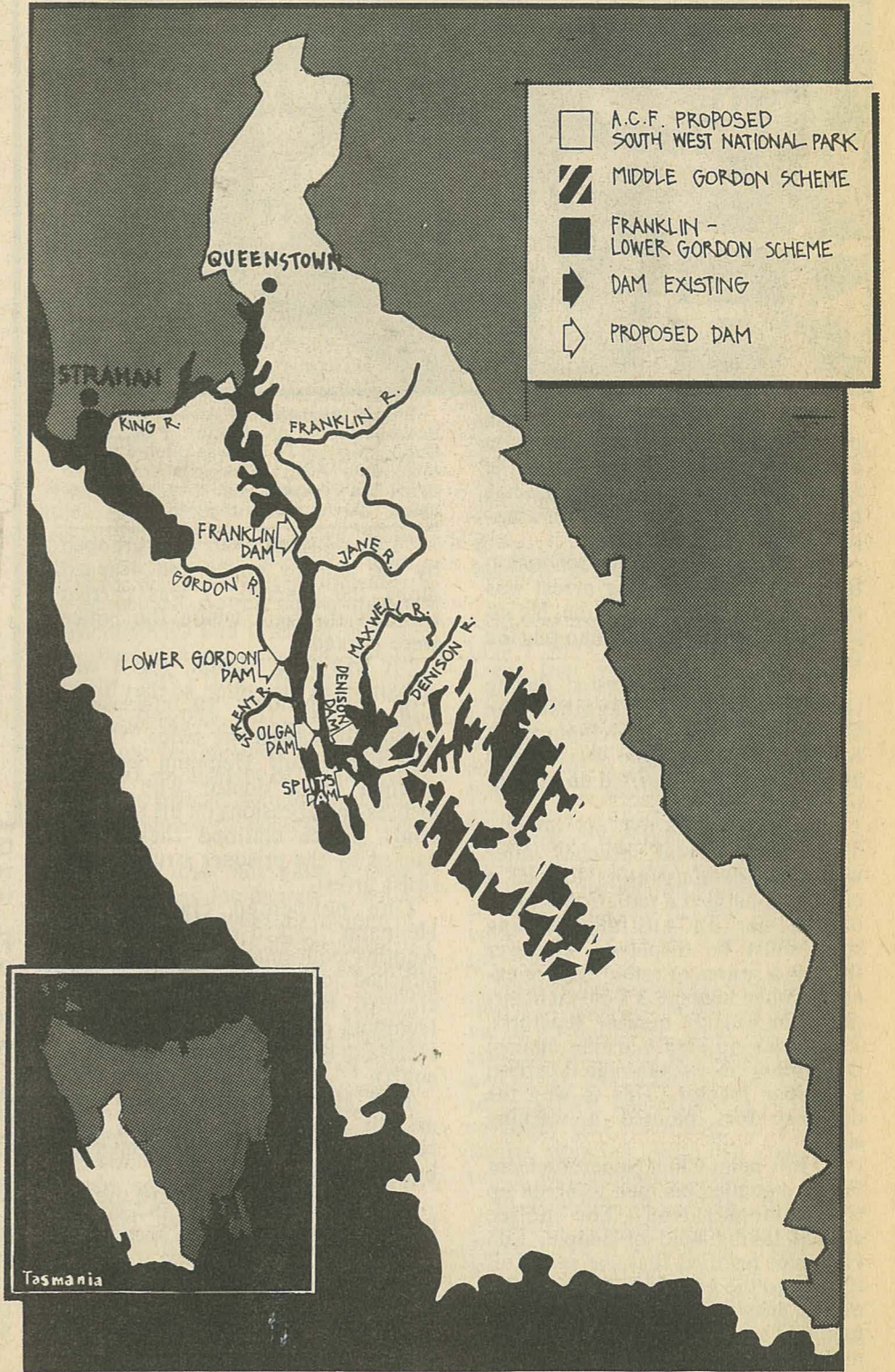
Well! That's a good thing, one would think. After all, hydro electric power is a renewable energy source, isn't it? No coal burning. No need to go nuclear.

But its rainfall and topography also make Tasmania one of the most unique and beautiful areas in Australia. Until recently much of the south-west of the state was left alone by exploiters. Dense temperate rain forest, wet climate and a poverty of mineral wealth made it unsuitable (or at least very difficult) for most forms of exploitation though a haven for wilderness lovers.

The damming and flooding of Lake Pedder in 1972, one of the most contentious and hard-fought conservation issues in Australia's history, changed all that. Since Lake Pedder, conservationists have had to fight tooth and nail to try to preserve as much as possible of this unspoilt wilderness from the bulldozers, chain saws and concrete mixers of mining, forestry and power authorities.

By 1985, the Hydro Electric Commission predicts, there will be no more rivers left to dam. Its eyes are now set on the Franklin River — the last major wild river in the state. The proposed scheme is huge and involves the flooding of most of the Franklin River Valley, the Lower Gordon River Valley and the Olga River Valley.

(Note: For a description of the Franklin River see HABITAT Vol 5 No 3 October '77. See also the HABITAT Special Issue on the Wonderful South-West.)





## Queenfish Protestor goes to jail



Rolf Heimann, one of the protestors arrested during a demonstration against the visit of the Queenfish nuclear submarine, has been sentenced to one month's imprisonment or a \$300 fine.

His appeal against the conviction for assault and resisting arrest was rejected on Thursday 15 June. He intends to go to jail rather than pay the fine.

Six people were arrested during the demonstration against the Queenfish's visit to Melbourne in March. The submarine was docked at Station Pier. It carried an arsenal of nuclear weapons.

The protest started off quietly. There were several speeches, after which the demonstrators formed a circle and painted a radiation symbol on the pier. In Australia warning signs must be displayed wherever there is a source of radiation (for example when luggage is x-rayed in airports, or outside nuclear reactors). There was no sign warning against the submarine, even though it carried a nuclear reactor. This is why the demonstrators painted a warning sign.

At this point Chief Superintendent Fisher signalled his men to break up the demonstration. The police started taking hold of people. Lila Heimann testified that she saw Rolf thrown to the ground by the pressure of the crowd, right in front of the police. This is Rolf's account of the incident:

The highlight of the "violent" demonstration on Station Pier. Chief Superintendent Fisher was quoted by the Melbourne AGE: "I asked them not to block the roadway, but they would not listen." So the police charged.

"I was pushed over, then grabbed by the hair by police and dragged along the concrete. I was carried through the gate where the police were parked.

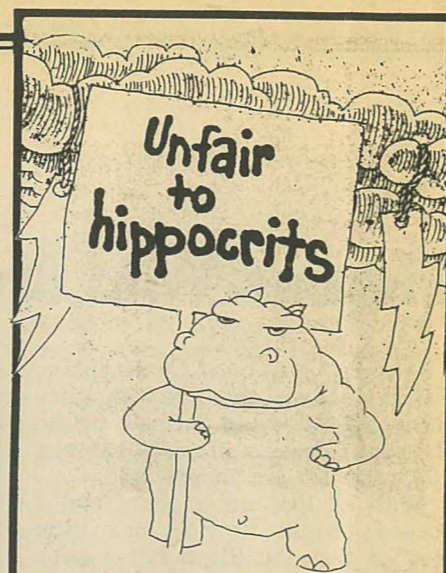
"It was very painful, and I was screaming at the police, so they dropped me on the ground. One policeman kicked me twice." Later that night Rolf Heimann was examined by a doctor who found bruises and abrasions on his body. In court police claimed these were caused by the prisoner struggling to resist arrest.

One policeman claimed Mr. Heimann "kicked him in the face". Another policeman said he had been punched on the chin. They also claimed they had informed Mr. Heimann of these accusations (Rolf Heimann says he first heard them in court).

Rolf Heimann was charged with assault, assault by kicking and resisting arrest. He was convicted but appealed.

Judge Wheelan, who heard the appeal, upheld the conviction. He said it was "an intolerable situation that police could be attacked by protestors at demonstrations".

Rolf Heimann points out that he could not possibly have kicked a policeman in the face from his posi-



A new book of cartoons called **Unfair to Hippocrits** will soon be available from Friends of the Earth. The book has a foreword by our old friend Spike Milligan and the drawings are by Rolf Heimann, a cartoonist whose work has appeared in the *NATION REVIEW* under the name "Lofo". The cartoons are on social themes, including the police system. Rolf Heimann is well acquainted with police brutality, following the Queenfish demonstration in which he was arrested (see *Earth News*, this issue).

**Unfair to Hippocrits** may be ordered from Friends of the Earth offices some time after the end of July this year.

tion on the ground. The Judge refused to accept Lila Heimann's testimony, as she is his wife.

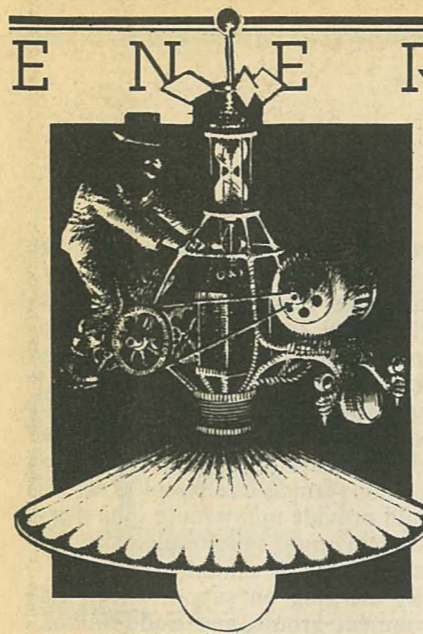
Rolf Heimann was captain of La Flor, one of the ships that sailed into the nuclear testing zone in 1974 to protest against the French nuclear tests in the Pacific. He is well-known for his belief in non-violence.

"Throughout my life I have never punched anyone. And I haven't led a sheltered life. In all the seaports where I have been — Marseilles, Hamburg, Tahiti — I have always managed to keep out of fights."

Mr. Heimann is married, with children, and now works as a cartoonist (see cartoon this page).

One other demonstrator was released with a bond. At time of writing four more are awaiting trial.

—Barbara Hutton



## Solar transition could start now

A report by the US Federal Energy Agency (FEA) on solar cells shows that, for an investment of US\$400m (less than the cost of one nuclear reactor) they could become competitive with conventional sources of power in the US within 10 years. In parts of the country the cost of electricity from solar cells would be competitive in 4 years.

The report does not rely on any technological breakthroughs to bring down prices. The estimate is based on the proposition that solar cell manufacturing companies would be guaranteed major government contracts thus encouraging them to develop cheap methods of mass production.

Barry Commoner (author of "The Poverty of Power") has used the report to deliver a devastating attack on President Jimmy Carter's energy policy. Carter's Energy Plan pays lip-service to energy conservation and the development of alternative sources of power, but its basic strategy is a massive program of constructing coal and nuclear-powered electric power stations. This, according to Barry Commoner, would encourage the growth of large-scale, energy intensive industries using electricity. Thus when non-renewable energy sources such as coal and

uranium ran out, the US would be in the position of having to use breeder reactors to lengthen the life of uranium supplies and keep its nuclear power stations operating.

Carter's energy plan claims that solar energy can play only a minor role in meeting short-term energy demands. By relying on coal and nuclear power instead of implementing the FEA's plan of encouraging solar cells, Carter (and his advisors) could be making this a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There are no technical barriers to the transition to renewable energy sources. The major problems are all political. The companies and government utilities in control of power-production are committed, economically and psychologically, to large-scale energy generation, using fuels such as coal, gas, oil and uranium. A transition to small-scale energy use based on solar-cells and other renewable sources would increase employment, cut down pollution and stabilise energy costs. However it is not likely to appeal to the giant corporations which deal in petrochemicals and uranium, just at the moment, since solar cells do not require any fuel. Government Departments are also inclined to balk at the idea that energy-production might revert to the local level, with thousands of small-scale generators instead of one large one, more amenable to centralised control.

Australia does not have a large enough market for energy to allow spectacular commercial development of solar electricity along the lines of the FEA plan. However we do have problems of energy supply which could be overcome by strong Government action to encourage energy conservation and use of solar power. Solar space and water heating is already viable for domestic, commercial and industrial purposes. Other ways of harnessing the sun, such as using it directly in solar cells or burning organic wastes (which store solar energy) are used on a small scale, but they could expand rapidly given Government assistance for research and development. Research in several important areas, including the use of non-

crystalline silicon to cut down on the cost of solar cells is underway in Australia. With strong Government support Australia could regain its former position as a world leader in solar technology and establish a strong export market. Continued Government indifference and antipathy may mean that when solar technology belatedly achieves widespread use in Australia it will be in a form determined by, and profitable to foreign companies.

Copies of Barry Commoner's "Carter's Energy Deception: The Nuclear Threat, the Solar Solution" are available from FOE Carlton for 40c.

Jack Gilding

## Low Energy Housing Advisory Service

If you are reading this magazine (and I think it would be difficult to argue that you are not) then the chances are that you have an interest in the wise and rational use of energy. Of course you may just be waiting for a dental appointment, but let us assume that you are genuinely concerned about the seemingly irreversible tendency toward greater per capita energy consumption, and the widespread use of fossil fuels and nuclear power to cope with this trend. What can you, the reader, do?

Although a great deal of information is available about energy conservation in the home, solar hot water systems, wind and hydraulic power, and so on, it is difficult to get a complete picture, and extremely difficult to apply this knowledge to a particular situation. Who can you turn to for free unbiased advice?

In March a Low Energy Housing Advisory Service opened in the Alternative Technology Suite at Friends of the Earth's plush Melbourne headquarters in fashionable Carlton. Since then a steady trickle of people have come



along on Tuesday evenings and have shivered through their ¼ hour 'consultancy'.

The service usually gives advice on two main topics: 'How to conserve energy in an existing house or flat'



and 'How to build a low energy house'.

The emphasis is definitely not on the 'hardware' approach to solar energy use, but instead concentrates on the use of north windows to catch the sun in winter, the use of a concrete slab floor to store the heat obtained and the use of insulation to retain it within the building. The need for air-conditioning in summer is avoided by the use of brick internal walls and a concrete floor which are cooled by night ventilation and act as 'heat sinks' during the day, and by effective shading of windows with awnings, trees and creepers.

Advice is available on the different types of ceiling insulation: it is possible to get a discount on certain types through FOE. Advice is also available on the use of curtains to prevent heat loss, blocking unused chimneys, weatherstripping doors and windows to reduce draughts, and on the right sort of solar hot water system for you.

If you live in Melbourne, and rent or own a house or flat, or are going to build a shack for yourself, why not ring 347 6788 and make an appointment for next Tuesday night?

And if you are not in Melbourne you can write to FOE, 51 Nicholson Street, Carlton 3053, enclosing as much information as possible, and a small donation to cover return postage, photocopying, leaflets, inflation and the rising cost of living.

And remember, diamonds used to be a girl's best friend, but nowadays everybody is hoarding their joules.

## Environmentalists For Full Employment

For too long people have accepted the notion that environmental considerations conflict with the goal of full employment. Business and government have tried to set workers and environmentalists against each other and have suggested that environmental considerations must be "sacrificed" to protect jobs.

A new organisation, Environmentalists for Full Employment, hopes to counter this myth and put forward positive action proposals which will demonstrate that sound conservation policies can improve the employment situation. In the words of Jack Munday, National Convenor of EFFE, "Environmental protection and socially-useful work for everyone who wants it are both imperative."

The formation of EFFE comes at an opportune time. Many important political decisions have to be made in the near future on how to cope with the problems of unemployment, resource depletion and environmental damage. The presently proposed political solutions, by their piecemeal approach, can only marginally improve some of these problems at the expense of worsening others. Bill Hayden, leader of the Australian Labor Party advocates reduced sales tax on cars to protect the Australian industry. If this resulted in increasing the number of cars on the roads it would hasten the depletion of our oil

reserves and further extend the destruction of our urban environment. The Liberal premier of Victoria, Dick Hamer plans to extend our oil reserves by converting coal to oil, thereby depleting our coal reserves and worsening the environmental damage to the Latrobe Valley. This project would require an enormous amount of capital which would provide many more jobs if invested in more labour intensive industries such as manufacturing.

By drawing on support from environment groups and trade unions, EFFE intends to develop practical policies to show that socially beneficial environmentally defensible jobs provide the key to an integrated solution to these problems.

A union or group can become a sponsor of EFFE by giving an annual donation of at least \$5. You can find out more about EFFE by contacting John Andrews, c/- ACF, 672B Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, 3122. Phone (03) 819 2888, Jack Munday, Total Environment



## FEMINISM & URANIUM Conference for women Melb. 19 & 20 August

Details: ring AUS Women's Dep't 03-347 7433 or CRAC 03-541 3141

Centre, 18 Argyle Street, Sydney 2000. Phone (02) 27 1497 or David Ross, c/- Trades Hall Council, Newcastle 2300, Phone (049) 21162. — Jack Gilding

## Companies buy into Victoria's coal

As a result of an amazing offer by the Victorian Government, twelve companies, including five multinational oil companies, have virtually bought themselves rights to commercial exploitation of Victoria's coal reserves. The companies have each agreed to pay \$150,000 towards a research program to identify the quality, location and chemical properties of Victoria's coal reserves. The results of the program will not be available to the people of Victoria who in theory own the coal.

The program is part of the Government's policy of encouraging

the private development of the state's coal reserves, especially the production of synthetic crude oil. The production of oil from coal is an extremely expensive process; estimates of the cost of one plant which would produce less than one sixth of Australia's present consumption of oil products vary from \$2-4,000m. Precise information on coal reserves is essential before the viability of such a plant can be established. Companies who have invested money in this research program are therefore in the exclusive position of being the only ones with the knowledge necessary to develop the coal to oil process. This is acknowledged in the Victorian Brown Coal Research and Development Committee's annual report which states, "Should the program successfully demonstrate that reserves of brown coal suitable for coal conversion projects exist in greater quantity than will be required for power generation purposes in the foreseeable future, such additional reserves will be preferentially allocated on an equitable basis to those participants in the program

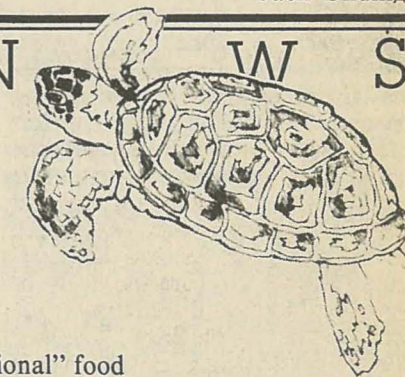
who are able to demonstrate their ability to construct and operate viable conversion plants."

The companies participating in this scheme are: Australian Paper Manufacturers; B.P.; Caltex Oil; Conzinc Riotinto Australia; Colonial Sugar Refineries; Esso; Heine Brothers; Mitsubishi Developments Pty. Ltd.; Kominic (A Japanese steel-making consortium); a consortium consisting of Mitsui and Co. Ltd., Gulf Oil Corporation, and the Electric Power Development Co. Ltd. of Japan; Mobil Oil and Shell.

The Victorian Government last promised that its official energy policy would be out shortly after April 17. The policy still hasn't appeared. To date the government has allowed the State Electricity Commission and private enterprise to do virtually what they like. So far this non-policy has met with remarkably little opposition. However as people become more aware of its consequences energy policy could become a major public issue — especially with a state election imminent.

Jack Gilding

# O C E A N S N E W S



## ANTARCTICA Is Russia deceiving the FAO?

Antarctica, once the great frozen, unwanted continent, is now wanted by just about every country on Earth.

Antarctica is rich in resources, both living and mineral, but at present it is the living resources which are attracting world attention: fish, crabs, squid, marine mammals and particularly krill are viewed as potential food sources for the world.

Yet, as far as most countries including those struggling to feed their people are concerned Antarctic resources might as well be as far away as the moon.

Antarctica and its surrounding seas are controlled by only thirteen countries, fortuitously thrown together during the International Geophysical Year of 1958. These countries are now in the process of attempting to set up a convention, or regime, to keep the "living resources" of Antarctica and the Southern oceans in their control.

One problem exercising the collective mind of the Treaty states is, what to do about the FAO? The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations is specially interested in what it calls "unconven-

tional" food reserves of the Southern Oceans and sees them, potentially, as a vital key to the alleviation of world hunger.

Although Friends of the Earth have frequently stated (in the Antarctic publication "ICE" as well as in Chain Reaction) that Antarctica cannot support interference on a large scale (remember the blue whale and the fur seal) we sympathise with the aims of the FAO. However it seems there is little hope of the FAO being party to Antarctic Treaty deliberations.

over



## How much is being taken?

The situation which causes the most concern is not so much that Antarctic resources are being harvested, as that we do not know **how much is being taken**. The latest FAO Fisheries Year Book (1976) lists all the reported catches of the thirteen Treaty states. Only Japan and Poland admitted to catching any fish at all. The total reported catch for 1976 was 2287 metric tons, whereas the FAO estimated that "indications of the level and composition of national fishing and experimentation activity (for waters below 45°S) in the 1977/8 season suggest a possible krill catch of up to 50,000 tons. In addition fish catches, mostly by the USSR, are thought to have exceeded 100,000 tons in some recent years." (Emphasis added.)

Assuming an even distribution of fish, a rough calculation based on FAO statistics for the areas just north of the Antarctic zones gives an average 101,000 metric tons of fish taken by Russia in waters between 45°S and the Northern-most latitudes of the Antarctic Zones. The Russians allege they took nothing in this area. Are the Russian trawlers repeatedly sighted in the Antarctic (below 60°S) on sight-seeing tours?

A further piece of evidence concerns krill. In 1976, Sayed El-Sayed of the Texas A & M University wrote in the *ANTARCTIC JOURNAL*, "the Soviet Union and Japan are well advanced in krill harvesting techniques; the Soviets are using three 3500 ton stern trawlers, and the Japanese are using two." The Japanese came home with 2266 tons from their two ships, yet, according to the statistics, Russia's three ships did not dock with any.

Once again, one could venture explanations: The crew was hungry and ate the catch. The krill was washed overboard by a freak wave. For four years they could not find any krill at all.

A more probable explanation could be that the USSR wants to hide its Antarctic catch, to avoid in-

curing the wrath of poorer nations without the facilities to exploit the Antarctic.

The FAO is in too delicate a position to question the discrepancies openly, but others concerned about the future of Antarctica cannot afford such restraint.

Why have the Russians not reported their catches? Just how much fish has the USSR taken from Antarctica? Can the Russians be prevented from overfishing and causing a collapse in the numbers of fish left for everyone else, including the Antarctic fauna, to eat?

Brian Appleford

## Something fishy

This year the Government's Inquiry into Whales and Whaling is considering evidence to decide whether whaling should continue in Australian waters.

Prime Minister Fraser promised a full Inquiry into Whaling in his election speech in December (1977). However, though the Inquiry is underway, the whales have had no respite.

Just before the Inquiry was announced the West Australian whaling company, Cheynes Beach Holdings, had its licence renewed. The company has a quota of 653 whales this year. The whaling season will be over by the time the Inquiry reaches a conclusion.

The Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development (EH & CD) has been prevented from making an independent submission to the Inquiry. The EH & CD is opposed to whaling, whereas the other Government department involved, Primary Industry, is in favour of whaling.

Originally the EH & CD was to be one of the principal parties to the Inquiry, with the right to put in an independent submission and to question witnesses. However pressure has been put on the Department to force it to put in a joint submission with Primary Industry. People working for the environment department are not happy.



While submissions to the Inquiry were still being received the Fisheries Act was amended to give Australia control over waters up to 200 miles from the mainland. In future foreign fishing fleets will need to have a licence in order to fish inside the 200 economic zone. However whaling has been specifically exempted from the laws, so that it is not under Australian control.

Mr. Sinclair, Minister of Primary Industry, justified this move by saying that Australia is a member of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and must therefore allow other IWC members to have access to Australian waters. Mr. Sinclair either invented this story or is totally ignorant of the rules of the IWC. The USA and New Zealand, both IWC members, have banned all whaling within 200 miles of their coasts.

The real reason for excluding whaling from Australian control has not been made public, but it seems probable that the Government is making preparations to allow foreign whaling fleets into Australian offshore waters, without being put in the embarrassing position of having to grant them an official licence.

If Cheynes Beach whaling station is closed down the Government will be able to use whaling as a bargaining point with other nations such as Japan and Russia, allowing them to whale in the Australian economic zone in exchange for a better deal for Australian exports — wheat, beef or minerals.

B. Hutton

# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE WORST KIND

On January 24 (1978) a Soviet satellite, Cosmos 954, powered by 100 lb of highly enriched uranium, streaked across the northern Canadian skies like a giant fireball disintegrating before it struck the ground.

For the first time the world heard of the use of so-called "peaceful nuclear technology" in space and at the same time experienced the terrifying consequences of a supposedly "remotely unlikely" nuclear accident.

The testing of nuclear weapons themselves in space is banned under the 1962 Partial test ban Treaty and the actual deployment of nuclear weapons in space is banned under a 1972 Treaty as part of the S.A.L.T. agreement. However the use of nuclear reactors and powerpacks is not banned even when used in military satellites.

## Solar versus Nuclear in the War-game

In recent years there has been an increasing number of nuclear satellites launched. Current "spy in the sky" technology depends not only on high resolution photography and electronic eavesdropping but an increasing range of detection devices with amazing capabilities. All of these devices require enormous amounts of energy. It is normal for

satellites such as weather stations and research vehicles to be powered by batteries and solar cells, an arrangement which has worked well over many years. However spy satellites often operate closer to earth and stay longer in the earth's shadow. Also they are getting bigger and the size of solar panels would make them very easily detected by enemy radar. Now that Hunter-Killer satellites and laser systems are being developed to knock out enemy satellites, keeping a spy satellite's location secret has become of paramount importance. Hence, without considering the consequences, military planners have moved towards building smaller nuclear-powered satellites. (The Russian satellite was about the size of a T.V. set.)

There are apparently about 20 nuclear-powered satellites in space, although many others would carry small radioactive sources for scientific purposes. These nuclear

satellites are in various orbits. Several of the American ones are "parked" in Geostationary orbits (22,000 km from the earth), having finished their active life, whilst the others are still in use in orbits generally less than 1000 kms away. Spy satellites tend to make their close sweeps at distances of less than 100 km from the earth. Because of its range of American military bases, Australia would be under continual observation. In fact the Russian satellite swept over Australia shortly before it crashed in Canada.

## Was that a piece of sky falling?

American space experts dismiss the possibility of a major accident as "very remote". They claim the orbits used will mean the satellites "will not fall to earth for hundreds of years" (a very forward-looking attitude).

The facts are however that no satellite has been in space more than two decades. A large number of satellites regularly falter and burn up in the upper atmosphere. But they don't disappear.

There is a world of difference between 100 lbs of iron and copper spread through the stratosphere and 100 lbs of plutonium or highly enriched uranium.

An accident in 1965 when an American satellite fitted with a nuclear powerpack burnt up over the



Pacific added 30% to the load of radioactive plutonium in the upper atmosphere.

The Russian satellite left a radioactive cloud over Canada 50-70 km high and 300-400 km long, according to Professor Heinz Kaminski, a West German space expert. Several dozen fragments of the satellite were found after considerable searching by ground crews but none of the actual fuel elements were found. Presumably they were burnt up and dispersed.

Experts from both Canada and the US had enormous difficulty locating the fragments, determining whether local people were endangered and deciding what action to take.

The fragments located so far have been spread over 600 km and most have been found by people who stumbled across them, not by search parties. A request that simple geiger counters be provided for Indian hunting parties who roam through the area was denied. So far no steps have been taken to determine the effect of radioactive build-up in animals such as the caribou, on which the native people depend for food.

In view of the numerous reassurances given concerning reactor accidents the authorities might have been expected to have taken great pains in dealing with this disaster. However nuclear accidents are extremely complex and almost impossible to deal with satisfactorily.

Official reactions to the accident were interesting. The Soviet news agency, Tass, said the satellite was designed to destroy itself on entering the atmosphere and hence had "ceased to exist". This did not stop the Russian Government from making strenuous efforts to get the fragments back, although it gave the Russians a convenient argument for denying the Canadian claims for compensation.

The US National Security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski did not clarify matters greatly when he commented, "Obviously if (the accident) had involved densely populated areas there would have been some concern regarding health hazards and it would depend on how much (contamination occurred) . . . there is no point in speculating if the reactor had not burned up, which is almost close to being totally unlikely."

(Mr Brzezinski was right in thinking that the satellite had burnt up. It had, dispersing uranium widely in the upper atmosphere.)

He added, "This difficulty in the space age is completely under control. We are planning for the worst."

After the Canadian crash, information about earlier accidents began to emerge. One American nuclear satellite crashed into the Pacific Ocean off Japan. On another occasion the landing module from an Apollo shot, carrying a nuclear powerpack, landed in the Indian Ocean off Madagascar. Neither has been recovered. Another nuclear satellite disintegrated in the upper atmosphere. None of these accidents (nor any possible Russian accidents) was reported at the time. It is now known that there have been six nuclear accidents in space and one deliberate explosion of a nuclear bomb.

Because Cosmos 954 landed on Canadian Territory the Americans and Russians (who both knew of the likelihood of the crash three weeks before it occurred) let the Canadian



Government into the secret. Australia was also thought to be a likely crash point and hence Malcolm Fraser was told as well. Despite this warning no special precautions or preparations were made for Australia.

However, when accidents happen in the oceans and the atmosphere the big powers (Russia and the US) appear to think there is no need to inform any other countries.

The two American satellites still on the ocean bottom carried SNAP generators (Systems for Auxiliary Nuclear Power). SNAP generators are not like conventional reactors which involve a moderated chain reaction. They are basically rods of highly enriched uranium or plutonium which give off steady heat from radioactive decay, without the need for constant monitoring. The Russians use a similar, though possibly more dangerous system.

One of the major concerns of the

Americans was that there might be a "critical mass" of uranium aboard the Cosmos 954. A "critical mass" is a mass of plutonium or highly enriched uranium large enough to cause a nuclear explosion if melted together. Apparently there was not enough for this to happen, but initially the Russians refused to tell them this, as to do so they would have had to give away important clues about the satellite's design.

The Americans claim that none of their satellites contain a critical mass of nuclear fuel and hence are "safer". On the other hand if someone were to fish one of the lost capsules from the bottom of the sea, they would have enough raw materials to manufacture a number of atomic bombs.

### The hills are alive with the sound of geiger counters

Following the interest shown in SNAP capsules used in space an American journalist, Howard Kohn, uncovered a story about their careless use on earth. Apparently in 1964 the CIA tried to establish a spy station in the Himalayas. They found they could get no power supply for their instruments, designed to keep watch on China's nuclear weapons testing programme. The simple answer was to use a SNAP capsule and leave it high up in the Himalayas.

It was said that the porters were fond of carrying the SNAP capsule because of the warmth it gave off.

Unfortunately the party sent to establish the station was caught in a blizzard and retreated, leaving their equipment in a crevice. Returning next spring the CIA agents found the equipment covered by an avalanche of thousands of tons of rock. The SNAP capsule was unrecoverable and may already be leaking into the Ganges River, which flows through one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Not to be put off, the CIA installed another nuclear spy station on a nearby mountain. This station may still be in action.

Andrew Herington

Sources —  
Herald 25/1/78  
Age 1/2/78, 26/1/78  
Time Magazine, various  
Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility "Update" Feb. 78  
C.I.C.D. file material

# URANIUM THREATENS VICTORIAN ALPS

Uranium has been discovered in Victoria!

Yes folks, just 12 miles north of Mansfield, in the Western slopes of the Alpine region, a West German company has recently completed the first stage of its exploratory drilling operations. But it will be back!

Uranagesellschaft ("Uranium Industry") Australia Pty. Ltd., has nearly 6000 square kilometres of the Central Highlands/Alps area under lease for uranium exploration. The leases begin north east of Mansfield at Tolmie and extend down the Snowy Range to finish near Bairnsdale at Hillside and Sarsfield (see map).

The company's "find" was first brought to FOE Carlton's attention late last year. Since then we have been attempting to uncover exactly who Uranagesellschaft is and what it is up to in the Alps. The following story unravels . . .

In November last year, Uranagesellschaft Aust. was granted exploration rights entitling it to search for uranium in the area mentioned above. Then in April of this year, its Australian partner in the venture, Northern Mining Corporation, released its quarterly report to the stock exchange, saying that a uranium occurrence of "possible interest" had been discovered.

In a report published in The Age, Northern Mining's managing director, Mr. N. R. Towie, admitted that "We are deliberately keeping this one low key as the West Germans are the managers." It was also suggested in the report that the "low key" approach was a result of protests from conservation groups worried that exploration will harm nearby Eildon Weir.

It is worthwhile to point out here that Uranagesellschaft, being 100 per cent West German-owned, is not a public company and therefore does not have to produce an annual report accessible to the public. Northern Mining, on the other hand, is not liable to supply information as it is not the manager: a very convenient arrangement to keep things "low key".

Following The Age report, I paid a visit to Uranagesellschaft's offices and spoke to its Senior Geologist, Mr. Peter Robinson:

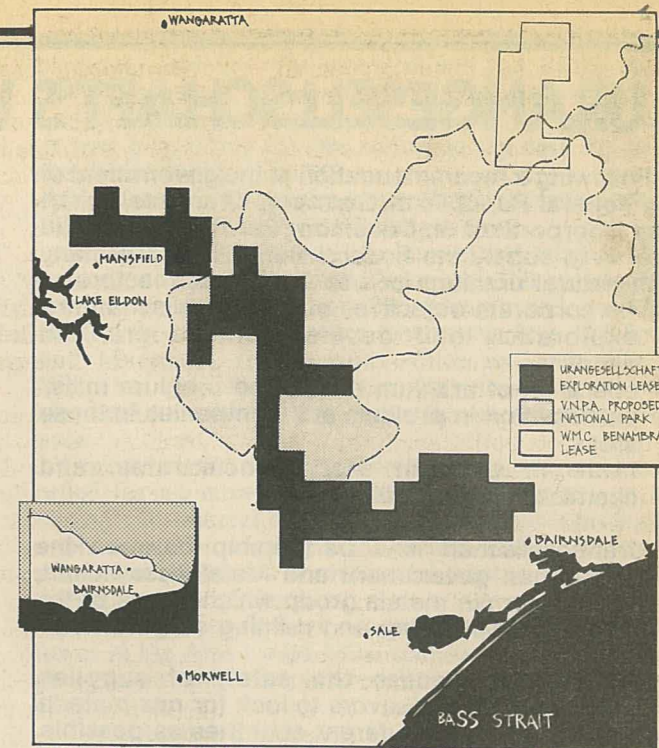
FOE: "We have been in contact with some residents from the Mansfield area. They are concerned about your company's uranium explorational activities — why are they being kept so quiet?"

UGS: "We are not trying to hush anything up, but we are not going to make them public because there is no need to. People would just not be interested."

FOE: "But some of your leases take in the major water catchment areas to Eildon Weir — don't you think this deserves concern?"

UGS: "There is no need for concern as natural seepage into Lake Eildon occurs anyway."

(Natural seepages are not dangerous, however once uranium ore is disturbed either through exploratory drilling or mining activity, it becomes more concentrated and seepage can certainly harm natural vegetation, water



Mining leases clash with national park.

catchments and wild life.)

FOE: "Can you tell us the result of your exploration so far?"

UGS: "What has been discovered is a higher than normal uranium occurrence within certain rock."

The conversation ended with an invitation from the company for FOE representatives to visit the site when drilling operations resumed. Most thoughtful!

This offer was duly taken up by two friends of the earth toward the end of May. This trip provided an interesting insight into the attitudes of not only the Uranagesellschaft executives and employees, but also those of some Mansfield identities.

The town's Shire Secretary Mr. Cairns, for example, claimed that he "was not one of these anti-uranium people", but was all for mining of any sort "if it was for the good of Mansfield". (Perhaps the Lang Hancock of the Alps?)

The owner of the land where the first drill holes have been bored is believed to be of the opinion that we should dig up all our uranium so that it can be made into bombs to drop on the Cubans in retribution for killing white South Africans.

And the Managing Director of Uranagesellschaft, Mr. John Barr, while driving through the mountainous countryside on the way to the site (in a company car decked out with "SOLAR NOT NUCLEAR" stickers mutilated to read "NUCLEAR NOT SOLAR"), claimed that this was when he felt "like a friend of the earth".

However, despite this somewhat overwhelming opposition we have established valuable local "onside" contacts who have been most helpful in supplying information and keeping a close eye on activities in the area.

It is only fair to point out at this stage that several other companies also hold exploration leases in this area which entitle them to explore for uranium. Among these are such notables as CRA (which holds a substantial lease adjacent to Uranagesellschaft) and Western Mining.

Yet the Premier, Mr. Hamer, seems oblivious as to



# URANGESCHAF'S WORLDWIDE ACTIVITIES

Following a recommendation of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, Urangesellschaft was incorporated on December 22, 1967. The main goal is to supply the Federal Republic of Germany with natural uranium for use in nuclear reactors.

- The corporate objectives of Urangesellschaft are
- exploration and development of uranium deposits,
  - operation of uranium mines and uranium mills,
  - participation in projects and companies in these areas,
  - trade in uranium ores, concentrates, and chemical compounds.

Urangesellschaft is a partnership between the West German government and Metalgesellschaft, the giant German metals group which is one of the world's largest smelting and refining corporations.

In order to secure the safety of supplies, Urangesellschaft endeavors to look for raw material sources in as many different countries as possible.

UG develops its own projects in areas which are known to contain uranium deposits as well as in areas which, based on geological considerations, might have a good potential for new uranium deposits, for example, Mansfield.

It is increasingly difficult to acquire mining rights in or near known uranium mining districts; frequently, therefore, UG forms joint ventures with local companies which control exploration and/or mining rights. In areas which have not been thoroughly explored it is quite possible to acquire relatively big concession areas at considerably lower cost; but the chances to find deposits are lower.

In a number of cases UG itself carries out the exploration activity; often the joint venture partners are the operators of the projects.

At the present time, UG is exploring for economically viable uranium deposits in Australia, Canada, United States of America, Brazil, Columbia, Indonesia, Niger, Federal Republic of Germany, South Africa and Italy. It played a large role in the establishment of the Rossing Uranium mine in Namibia, and now has interest in Australia. It has been exploring for uranium in the Ngalla Basin in the Northern Territory since 1975. It also holds a share in the Westmoreland deposit in Queensland and has an offer to Western Mining Corporation for a 10-14% share of the Yeerilee uranium deposit in Western Australia.

The annual exploration budget is approximately DM20-25 million (US\$8-10 million).

Any significant uranium discovery made by the company in Australia is assured of a market as the West German government is set on a nuclear energy programme, despite large protests from the West German people.

One of Metalgesellschaft's major shareholders (33-1/3%) is the giant German electric firm Siemens who are currently engaged in producing nuclear reactor components.

The "Australian partner", Northern Mining, is mainly an investment and exploration company. Its major shareholders include the Australian subsidiary of the London-based company Mitchell Cotts Pty. Ltd. Other shareholders include the Anglo-Australian nominees, National nominees and Belfast nominees.

what is happening in his own state. He has stated that "There is no known uranium in Victoria"! Following news of Urangesellschaft's discovery, the Victorian Minister for Minerals and Energy, Mr. Balfour, when questioned in Parliament, was unable to say whether any companies were exploring for uranium here. (Some time later he admitted that six different companies held leases entitling them to search for uranium and other minerals in Victoria.)

This could be seen as an attempt to stifle the uranium debate. In Victoria there are thousands of people opposed to uranium mining, yet the state government appears to blatantly ignore this.

However, there may be another important reason why certain "interests" are intent on keeping this issue quiet. In a submission to the Land Conservation Council (a body established by the State government to recommend land use zoning throughout Victoria) the Victorian National Parks Association has proposed that most of the Alpine region should be declared a National Park.

At present mineral exploration leases including those held by Urangesellschaft and Northern Mining take up about three-quarters of the proposed park.

In the past much of the Alps area has been destroyed by logging of Alpine Ash and free range grazing. Now it seems mining companies are staking their claim.

The Land Conservation Council (LCC) in its proposals for the area has recommended multiple zoning under



Uranium prospectors' drill near Mansfield, Victoria.

separate management, with usage including continued logging, grazing, mining, exploration and motorised recreation. In selected areas only has it proposed a phase-out of timber production and grazing, and only a tiny area has been proposed as wilderness and reference zones. (These are areas which should remain undisturbed, allowing plants, animals and soils to survive and interact with minimal interference by man.)

Section L of the LCC's proposals, entitled "Mineral and Stone Production", is most revealing. This opens

with the statement, "The continued existence of our technological society will depend upon the availability of minerals". The report goes on to say "It is important therefore that the reservation of conservation areas should not automatically exclude exploration for mineral or fossil fuel resources."

It is little wonder then that mining companies have been granted leases in the proposed wilderness and reference zones.

Earlier this year, Mr. Hamer called a press conference to announce that Western Mining Corporation had made a major copper discovery near Benambra in the north-east of the state. What he failed to say was that not only was this discovery in the Victorian National Parks Association's proposed national park, but that it was also in an LCC proposed Reference zone, described in the Alpine Study Report as "Areas of land that comprise tracts of public land containing viable samples of one or more land types that are relatively undisturbed and that are reserved in perpetuity". The LCC recommends that these areas should not be tampered with and "natural processes should be allowed to continue undisturbed."

Urangesellschaft leases also cover not only the Wonangatta and East Caledonia reference zones but also the proposed Avon wilderness.

It would seem then that mineral exploration and particularly mining would be automatically excluded if these proposals were adopted.

Not so! The LCC provides itself with an alarming loophole obviously favorable to the government's attitudes by saying that "when a new deposit is discovered in an area where mineral extraction is not a currently approved land use, it may be of such importance that a change of land use is required in the National interest".

And who decides if it is in the National interest? The LCC proposes that it should do so in conjunction with the Mines Department!

A potentially disastrous situation exists in the Alpine region. If the present rate of hardwood timber production

continues, supplies of Alpine Ash will last, at the most, for another eight to ten years. Grazing is continuing to foul the countryside and rivers, and other activities such as trail-bike riding etc. are adding to the destruction of the environment.

Now mining companies are posing a threat to one of Victoria's few remaining wilderness areas.

Few people are aware of the impact that mining AND extensive exploration will have on this area. The Urangesellschaft operation for example will not only have drastic effect on water catchments (e.g. the Avon and Macalister river regions which feed into Eildon Weir) but also local farming communities and the popular and valuable fishing industries in the Bairnsdale area.

Friends of the Earth's submission to the LCC has called for an immediate, indefinite moratorium on all mining and mineral exploration. We have also proposed a phase-out of logging and grazing and that severe restrictions be placed on motorised recreation and other damaging uses of the Alps.

If these proposals were adopted, Mansfield and other towns in the Alps would NOT become ghost towns! The government and "other interests" seem to be ignoring the alternatives.

The potential for the tourist industry to supply both employment and finance in these local communities is enormous. The Alpine region is Victoria's major and yet largely neglected tourist asset.

Logging, grazing and mining industries all revolve around capital intensive production as opposed to labour intensive — and all of these activities provide little or no employment for women. Tourism, if developed in a sane and rational way, could alleviate these trends.

It would also, most importantly, help protect our Alpine region from permanent destruction.

Urangesellschaft is one company that has withdrawn from Mansfield for the winter. Severe weather conditions have beaten it for a few months only.



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# I N T E R V I E W

## GALARRWUY YUNUPINGU

Galarrwuy Yunupingu grew up in the Northern Territory, at Yirrkala on the Gove Peninsula. His father, Mungarrwuy (now over 80) was the head of his clan, and Galarrwuy was taught to perform the traditional ceremonies, and to hunt. He also went to the Methodist school at Yirrkala, and then spent three years at the Bible College in Brisbane, training to be a missionary. As the years went by, he realised it was false to preach a "foreign" religion; it merely confused the aboriginal people and made them lose their direction. He gave up Christianity (while retaining some respect for it) and determined to work for his people.

Some time later, Galarrwuy took a job with the Northern Land Council, which represents the traditional aboriginal clans of the top end of the Northern Territory and fights for land rights on their behalf. At 29, he is now chairman of the Northern Land Council. He is responsible for negotiating with the mining companies who plan to mine uranium in the Alligator Rivers area.

*The following interview with Galarrwuy Yunupingu took place in May this year at a mining camp not far from the old Rum Jungle uranium mine, after a successful hunting trip.*

*Galarrwuy was speaking to Nina Claditz, a West German anti-nuclear activist who made the film "Better Active Today than Radioactive*



*Tomorrow'. Their conversion gives some insight into the way Northern Territory aborigines feel about uranium mining, following the Government's decision to allow preliminary drilling at the Pancontinental tailings dam site. It appears that aboriginal opposition to mining is still strong.*

**NINA: What is the standpoint of the Northern Land Council and the aborigines in the whole uranium question?**

**GALARRWUY:** The Aboriginal people of the region where the uranium basin is, the landowners, have been very strongly opposed to the uranium development itself and that was told very strongly to the Fox Inquiry when Fox gathered all the information for the Government . . .

I think Aborigines throughout Australia, if you can say it, are opposed to it. Of course by tradition we have always known that uranium was there, a long time before the Europeans ever knew the danger of uranium. What I can gather (from) people who actually lived in the region (is that) basing it on the ancestral dreaming, or gods, the big python snake always lived in the Escarpment where it is called Jidbi Jidbi in Aboriginal terms, or Mt Brockman in white fella's terms. In the foot of that mountain where the uranium is being found, the saying is that if anyone goes near that place a big snake will come out and destroy every living thing on the face of the earth. And sure enough if you look at it . . . in the scientific term, I think you'll find out how true it is.

**(NINA asks Galarrwuy to explain what he means.)**

**GALARRWUY:** You can talk about the technology of developing anything that is dangerous whether it is chemical, whether it is radioactive, anything you can call dangerous.

. . . I think we were better off in understanding how dangerous things can be than the European is. Aboriginal

Mining is not new to Galarrwuy. He first came face to face with it as a teenager, when Nabalco set up its bauxite mine at Gove. The elders of his tribe had no idea of the damage the mining would do to the countryside; how it would pollute the water, kill fish and cover the land with sterile pans of toxic red mud. They were told by the mining, not consulted.

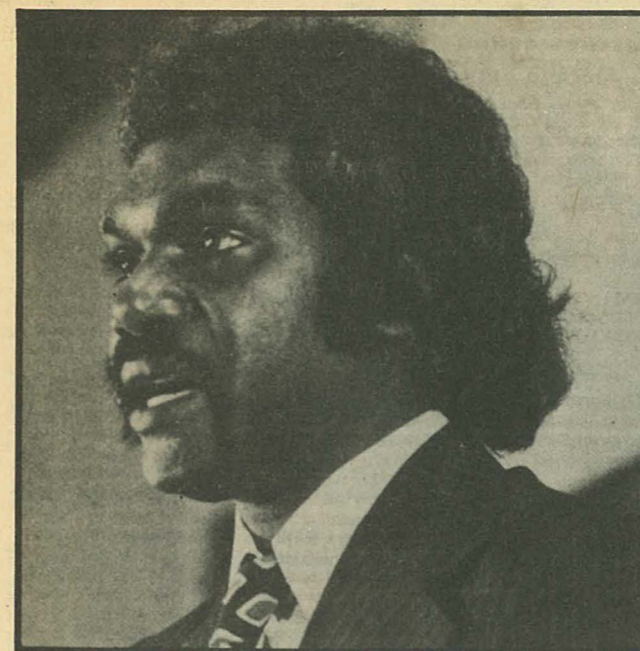
Mining companies have treated aborigines with contempt on many occasions, and have deliberately searched for minerals on aboriginal reserves rather than on land owned or leased by whites. In 1976, CRA, the company which controls the Mary Kathleen uranium mine, had a survey made of every aboriginal reserve in Australia. Reserves were sorted into four categories: "prime targets", "areas that, in the long term, must be thoroughly investigated" and two types of areas with low mineral potential. Aborigines have no veto of mining on their land, though they do have the right to negotiate for compensation. The threat of mining is constantly hanging over their heads.

people have always regarded certain areas dangerous because of some environmental danger, and so it was regarded sacred, because of something that is there, unseen . . . I think the Aboriginal people never made any move to find out beyond what you can actually experience. Experiencing is more than finding it out.

**(NINA asks how the mining companies and the Government have put pressure on aborigines to accept mining.)**

**GALARRWUY:** I think this would be the first time . . . that Aborigines in this part of the country will ever see the development of such a dangerous mine. (It is) the richest uranium in Australia, maybe the richest in the world, and the processing of uranium on the site is being questioned by Aboriginal people, because you come in with scientific terms and try to influence us to understand your point of view, your technology, which is very hard for us to understand . . . We know by experience that uranium as it is when it comes out of the ground is dangerous, and it can be worse (depending on how) you want to use it. It can be dangerous, it can be worse.

. . . You and I know very well, a human being can humanly go (only) as far as the limit for a human being. You cannot make yourself as a (piece of) wood, you cannot create yourself as a piece of steel, because (then) you cannot feel anything. I think Aborigines are always aware that we are part of the nature . . . I mean we are sensitive to it . . . We say the European must be stupid and mad . . . how can they be so human, and still step



aside and create such a thing and live in it? I mean, you must be crazy to do that kind of thing. We are people of the earth, and we expect a person of the other race to be the same.

The only sensible thing I could do is to convince people to be more understanding, to put themselves into a human position . . . It doesn't matter whether you are black, white or brindle, you have to be a human being to be able to understand the thoughts of a man next to you . . . You are a person with two legs, although you speak a different language.

And when you put yourself into a category where there is all dollar signs, you must be just one dollar as well. You're just a piece of twenty cents. That's what a miner is, he is a piece of twenty cents, or a twenty dollar bill, he is not a human being any more. All he's being is a piece of dollar sign.

**NINA: Galarrwuy, what (have they been doing) against you people in the last few years, since you started your fight against uranium mining?**

**GALARRWUY:** Well, the thing that I see is continuous pressure on Aboriginal people, especially the landowners of the uranium region . . . That is, the Government continuously passing legislation to block any Aboriginal people saying "NO" to uranium development. The other thing is the pressure that my people have to accept the decisions of the Government whether they like it or not . . . although we might like to say something that might change the decision of the public or of the Government.

But Government is Government and therefore we must accept the terms and conditions laid down by the Government . . . to be honest, Aborigines accept the Government of the country much better than the Europeans (do). Because I think we have lived in this country and suffered and experienced good and bad in the existence of Australia progressing towards self-development . . . But it has always been one-sided, the Aboriginal people being pushed aside and disregarded . . . I think Aboriginal people are trying their hardest to (right) that mistake . . .

**NINA: What experiences have you had with mining companies?**

**GALARRWUY:** The mining companies are always challenging Aboriginal people, they are always ignoring Aboriginal wishes . . . they say our land is just the topsoil of a piece (of land) where we live. They don't know that the very core of the land itself, which is the mineral, is the bone of the Aboriginal being. It is my bone . . . (When you say) an Aboriginal person doesn't have the mineral rights, it is saying that you've got no bone.

**(NINA asks what role the churches are playing in this question.)**

**GALARRWUY:** I think their interest is mainly spiritual, although . . . some church organisations have to be involved in politics if they are mindful of aboriginal people; if their aim is to see Aboriginal people develop towards involvement in political fights. It's happening only where that particular church is concerned for people and their welfare. If churches, and there are many which I don't want to mention . . . think that they can dominate people spiritually and otherwise (which is completely) — the "sinful" approach — that church is not what it (pretends) to be.

**(NINA asks Galarrwuy how racism affects his people.)**

**GALARRWUY:** . . . I think racism came to exist in Australia through white society and from overseas. Of course we are made to be, and make that point clear, we are made to become racist. It is not our nature being racist . . . If I meet you in the street and you turn your back and look the other way, I know you are racist but I feel sorry for you, because you are making me racist, which is not my nature. In other words, bad luck, keep your racism to yourself, because I'm not interested.

**(NINA compliments Galarrwuy on these words.)**

**GALARRWUY:** What I am saying is that it can be a great lesson — that these kind of words can change people. I am confident because I don't only work to earn money, so that I can, you know, support my family. My aim is to educate.

**(NINA asks whether the German anti-nuclear movement could help the Aborigines and whether Galarrwuy has anything to say to the movement in general.)**

**GALARRWUY:** Well, I don't know. I'm not in a position of making any comment on that . . . If I could study your movement, and where you stand at the present movement, I would definitely work in or help, I mean ask for help if I could put it that way . . . We cannot over-ride the Government position or decisions. Therefore we just have to seek people within Australia or internationally for support on how we can stop uranium mining on Aboriginal land.

. . . (You want me) to understand your position (so that) together we can strongly oppose uranium mining — is that what you're getting at?

**NINA: Yes.**

**GALARRWUY:** Well, my position is that I would love to bring about that relationship — it doesn't just have to be with Germany, it has to be with everybody and Germany is part of it . . .

I would make an appeal to anybody interested to come to me. If the Government is too strong and our wishes are being over-ridden by the Government of Australia, I will continuously oppose, I will stand strong, I will fight, and therefore I am not going to depend on the Government of Australia. I would seek help internationally.



# ABORIGINES AND CONSERVATION

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act was introduced by the Federal Government in 1976. It gave aborigines in the Northern Territory the right to make claims on unalienated crown land that they have traditionally occupied. No claims could be made on privately owned or leased land for which purpose a restricted Aboriginal Land Fund was established. A land rights Commission was established

headed by a white judge, Mr Justice Toohey, to hear the claims made by traditional owners.

So far three Aboriginal land claims have been heard in the Northern Territory — in the Alligator Rivers area (the "Uranium Province"), Borrooloola and Tanami (see map). In each of these claims conservation has been raised as an issue.

## The Alligator Rivers claim and the Kakadu National Park

The Alligator Rivers claim was made in the context of long standing government proposals to set up a national park in the area. The Aboriginal traditional owners declared their willingness to accept a national park, if the area was made Aboriginal land. The Ranger Inquiry, which had been given the role of an Aboriginal Land Commission, recommended that the Aboriginals had proven traditional ownership, and that the claim area should become Aboriginal land. However, the Aboriginal owners would then be required to lease the land to a government conservation authority to be managed as a park.

The central question of the hearings was the management arrangement for the proposed Kakadu national park. In general both the Northern Land Council, which presented the claim on behalf of the traditional owners, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, were prepared to accept a future status of Kakadu as Aboriginal land with the Service as managers. They did not appear before the Inquiry as antagonists.

## The Borrooloola claim

The Borrooloola claim was the first in which a possible conflict arose. At stake was the Pellew island group, one of the three areas of unalienated crown land which constituted the claim. Apart from an ignored recommendation from the Northern Territory Wildlife Advisory Council, no action had ever been taken by any government organisation to conserve wildlife on the islands. However the Northern Territory Department of Resources and Health tendered a C.S.I.R.O. report to the hearing which proposed reserving them as sanctuaries, on the grounds of the diversity and abundance of their wildlife. No mention was made of aboriginal use of the area. In a statement accompanying the report the department claimed that the islands generally speaking have been uninhabited by humans on a permanent basis. It was forced to retract this under cross examination by the Land Council.

## The Warlpiri claim

The third claim to be heard was made by the Warlpiri people and concerned the Tanami region. The objection made by the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission to this claim was a major threat to land rights. Approximately half the claim consists of the Tanami Desert Wildlife Sanctuary. At the hearing of the claim the Commission maintained that whether or not this became Aboriginal land it would need continuing

protection with special measures for the preservation of its flora and fauna, and that "major planning, major policies concerning the movement of people and stock and so on" would have to be its responsibility. The effect of Tanami Sanctuary remaining under Commission control would be to deny the Warlpiri full land rights. As it was, their claim was restricted to the less well-watered areas of their traditional lands.

Aboriginal reaction to the objections of conservation bodies has been to insist that their record as conservationists is good. Most people, even those opposing land claims, agree that this was once the case. Terms such as equilibrium and balance are often used to describe the relationship between Aboriginals and their environment.

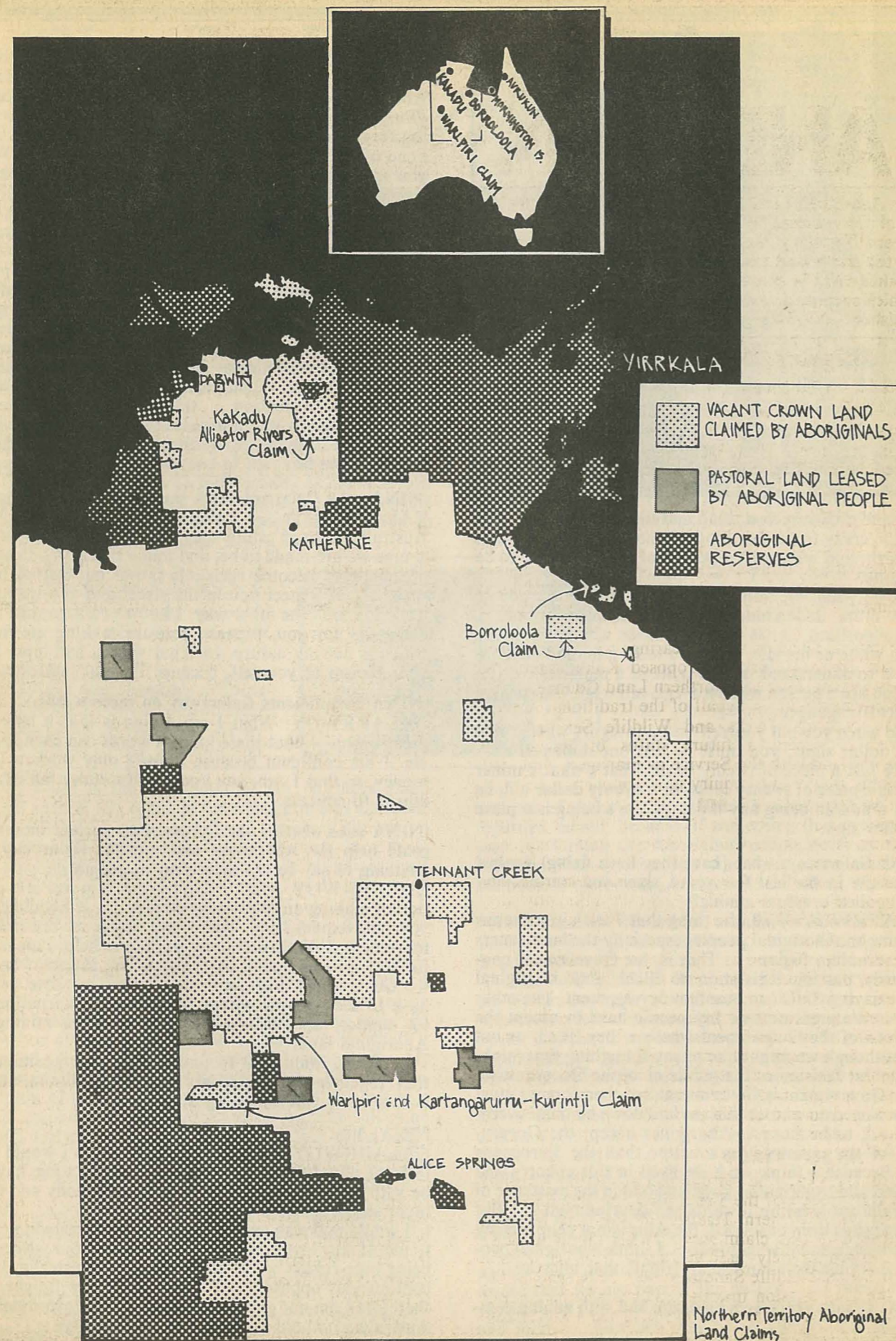
## Conservation in the past

In his book *The Australian Aborigines* the anthropologist A. P. Elkin wrote that the Aboriginals were able to live as they did in Australia for thousands of years "because instead of exploiting it they adapted themselves to and reached an equilibrium with it". T. G. H. Strehlow has described the relationship between population and food resources as a "perfect balance". These terms gloss over the necessary adaptive changes that had to be made to meet varying seasonal and climatic conditions, but they do give a true general picture.

When Aboriginals first came to Australia there was a period of adjustment as environment and man adapted to each other, during which Aboriginal hunting practices may have contributed to the decline of the 'megafauna' — the giant predecessors of the present marsupials. However as the period of decline of these species was concurrent with extensive climatic changes, most investigation of the role played by Aboriginals is speculative. There is no evidence that any species has ever been exterminated by Aboriginals.

## Burning.

As Aboriginals adjusted to the world around them, their hunting and foraging and the burning which accompanied it became built into the environment. The story of the western hare-wallaby provides an example of the way in which animals became dependent on the type of burning carried out by Aboriginals for suitable food and habitat. This hare-wallaby once occurred throughout semi-arid areas, but is now restricted to a few remnant populations in Central Australia, and on two offshore islands of Western Australia. Two colonies have been observed and documented in the Tanami Sanctuary northwest of Alice Springs. Both number about six to ten animals. While remaining stable, over a period of two





years observation neither colony has extended, nor have any colonies been found in any adjoining areas of suitable habitat. The scientists who reported on these observations have attributed the continued existence of the two colonies to:

"Consistent winter burning resulting in a tight mosaic of various stages of fire succession. This provides natural fire-break areas and a series of alternative refuge areas if required. In the past this burning pattern has been carried out by Aborigines.

"Without this deliberate burning the western desert country has been subject to uncontrolled hot summer fires that have destroyed the hare-wallabies' habitat over most of its range."

In the Tanami area the old burning practices were discontinued when the aborigines, under Government policy, were moved into settlements on the fringes of their traditional lands. After this most of the Aborigines' hunting was confined to limited areas, although they continued to make trips to their homelands. The area in which the hare-wallabies were found is adjacent to an old stock route which is still burnt from time to time in winter.

### Modern hunting

Present day hunting methods are often dependent on vehicles and rifles. Vehicles are sought after as a means of access to homeland areas, as much as for hunting. The two activities are generally combined as a matter of preference. Rough roads necessitate the use of four wheel drive vehicles. Rifles are preferred to spears for their greater efficiency. Small crowbars are sometimes used as digging sticks. In coastal waters of northern Australia men fish from boats equipped with outboard motors. Some burning is still carried out, and native seeds, fruit and vegetables are still gathered in much the same way they have been for centuries.

The introduction of modern hunting methods has not

increased the amount of food taken by Aborigines. They now buy much of their food. Some of them have access to cheap beef from reserves and Aboriginal-owned cattle stations. Many of them are only able to hunt at weekends.

Despite the use of purchased food, mostly flour, sugar and tea, people still regard bush food as essential. A belief in its superiority is universal. People who are sick often express a preference for it. Amongst native fruit particular importance is placed on solanums, which are high on vitamin C. These are even a successful competitor with sweets and soft drinks among children. A white observer has recorded a group of them running over to a vehicle fresh from a hunting trip, shouting out 'lollies, lollies' as they caught sight of some wanakitji — a solanum species — on board.

There is nothing to suggest excessive offroad travel in vehicles. Most of the alarm which has been generated about the impact of present day activities is based more on a fear of future trends than careful study. Thus the response of one biologist, who was predicting fire and brimstone should Aborigines be given land rights to one particular area, when he was confronted with a mass of evidence that Aboriginal customs were continuing strong through the younger generation, was to say that perhaps there were no grounds for concern, but there would be in thirty or forty years. Presumably he meant that the present younger generation will maintain traditional values, but that their children won't.

Present Aboriginal hunting is not endangering any areas of Australia, nor is it threatening any species of wildlife. Given Aborigines expressed desire to reserve their land and its resources, this situation should continue. Considering the way wildlife authorities, universities and voluntary organisations have ignored them in the past they show an amazing willingness to co-operate with these bodies.

# BORROLOOLA LAND CLAIM

## PEOPLE IN CRISIS

For nearly a century the aboriginal people of Borroloola have suffered severe treatment by white people, who have tried to suppress their beliefs and traditional way of life. In spite of this, they have retained much of their traditional culture, and at last there is some hope for them. The Aboriginal Land Commissioner Mr Justice Toohey has recommended that some of the land around Borroloola

should be granted to the traditional owners.

However the cultural survival of the black people is threatened by mining, and the large influx of mining workers this would entail. Peter Burgoyne, who visited Borroloola shortly before the Land Rights hearings, wrote the following report.



About 300 people live in the township of Borroloola (in the Northern Territory) during the dry season, and up to 700 during the wet when people return from working on cattle stations. Most of the people are members of the Yanyula, or Garawa tribes. There are also Mara, Gurdanji and Binbinga people, about a dozen white people and some aborigines from other areas.

### The Land Rights Claim

In July 1977 the Northern Land Council, acting on behalf of the traditional owners, applied for aboriginal land rights to three areas: Borroloola Town Common, an area of 1366 square kilometres surrounding the town; the Sir Edward Pellew Islands in the estuary of the McArthur River, and the proposed Robinson River Reserve (see map).

The Northern Land Council's submission, prepared by anthropologist John Avery and site recorder Dehne McLaughlin, provided evidence that people living at Borroloola were the traditional owners of these areas. Moreover they relied on the land, particularly Borroloola Common, for hunting, fishing and food gathering as an important part of their nutrition. Many of the traditional owners wanted to return to their land.

### Government submissions

The Department of the Northern Territory's submission dealt at length with mining, fishing and pastoral interests, giving no serious consideration to the interests of

the aborigines who constitute the majority of people in the area. The Department's first submission was so blatantly biased that it was eventually withdrawn and racist paragraphs were removed.

The Department wishes to encourage commercial fishing in the area, but in some cases this conflicts with the need to control fishing. There is great danger that stocks of fish such as Barramundi will be depleted, as has happened in Queensland. The desire to increase fishing is also inconsistent with the Department's policy of encouraging mining, which would pollute the rivers and coastal waters, destroying the barramundi and prawn fishing industries.

The Wildlife Section of the Northern Territory Department of Resources and Health submitted a survey made by the CSIRO in 1966-67, which found that the islands had a diverse and abundant wildlife with characteristics quite different from the mainland species. It argued that Pellew Islands should be preserved as flora and fauna reserves. However there was no evidence that granting aboriginal land rights would lead to the destruction of wildlife. The destruction of wildlife populations on the mainland has been due to grazing and introduced species, not the aborigines.

### The result

Justice Toohey found that traditional ownership of Borroloola Common and most of the Pellew Islands was established. However he was "unable to find that there

All land we want is bush. So whites want it for wildlife. But wildlife always been owned by traditional people and looked after. Wildlife belongs to Aborigines like states belong to Australia.

When white people look they don't know sacred sites, just see beautiful country. Then Aboriginal people come along, see people there — there might be fights. We want to make peace talk for Aborigines and Europeans in Government law, we want good land and sites under Government law all over Australia. That's why we want Government to settle Aboriginal people in their own country — the people who call themselves traditional. The Government only believes in traditional people. The Government's right. The traditional people should get their land for their kids. Then the traditional people can decide if other people come in. Like my family here — my sister, my brother — not traditional but they come back all to live. If I'm not traditional I gotta go back to where my father or grandfather or father's grandfather was born. Goes right back to the old sacred sites where spiritual life comes out — then we follow that. I got to be looking after the sacred sites and **work** for the sacred sites.

Only the thing we got to care for when we go out to see beautiful country around good areas in Central Australia — we got to be careful of bushfire. Fire's the one destroys millions of land and sacred sites.

—Wenten Rubuntja, Chairman Central Land Council

In the olden days the Warlpiri used to hunt all over there. We used to hunt all sorts of animals. We Aborigines used to eat all those animals. We were all living together.

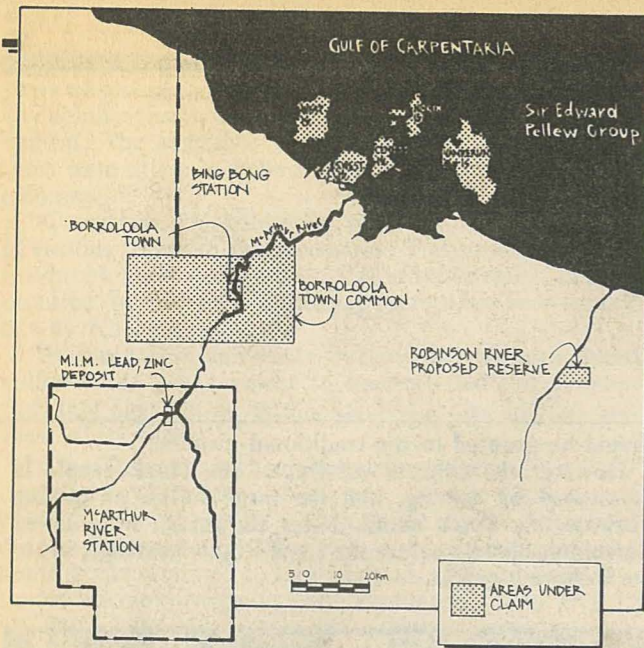
When everyone left their land they left those animals and the only ones they now hunt from the settlements are the animals that travel for long distances like kangaroos, emus, goannas and turkeys.

Those whites are bringing up new laws. They are only new ones because we Aborigines had our law all the time, for animals and for all. We are used to living together. We didn't clean them up.

Europeans want to try to block us from hunting. Everyone is frightened that they are not allowed to go around the country for camping out.

—Phar Lap Japangardi, Warlpiri 13-9-77





are traditional Aboriginal owners" of the proposed Robinson River Reserve and most of South West Island.

Justice Toohey recommended that Aboriginal Land Trusts should be set up for Borrooloola Common, Vanderlin Island and West Island. This will be carried out, according to Mr. Viner, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The Borrooloola case is of enormous significance to black people throughout Australia. Insofar as the Commissioner recommends that land rights should be granted to the traditional owners, it is a milestone in the battle to reverse the harm done to black people by whites. In the words of Justice Toohey, "The destruction of Aboriginal society has been very much related to the deprivation of land. There is good reason to believe that the recognition of traditional land claims will help to arrest the destruction and to some extent restore the dignity of the people concerned."

One reason for the failure to grant land rights for the entire area was the lack of evidence of traditional ownership, particularly evidence linking the claimants to specific sites. In the words of Justice Toohey the investigators for the Northern Land Council worked "painstakingly and well". Opponents of the claims even argued that the investigators' evidence was invalid because they were overly sympathetic to the aborigines. However none of the investigators for the Northern Land Council had ever visited the proposed Robinson River Reserve, and it appears that only one of the aborigines involved, Old Davey, had ever been there.

### The McArthur River Mining Project

One of the groups giving evidence to the Commission was Mount Isa Mines, a subsidiary of the American-based multi-national ASARCO. About 100 km upstream from Borrooloola on the McArthur River lies a massive 190 million tonnes proven orebody of lead, zinc and silver. Mount Isa Mines through its subsidiary MIMETS plans to mine the deposit and already has a large-scale pilot plant operating.

In January 1977 the company made an agreement with the Commonwealth Government, the details of which have been kept secret from the Australian public. The company proposes to build a town of two to three thousand people near the mine site, and another township and

deep water port at Horn Islet, 170 km away in the Gulf of Carpentaria (Horn Islet is one of the Pellew group of islands and is in the Aboriginal land claim).

It also wishes to build a road and pipeline to carry the highly toxic lead and zinc slurry to the port. Mount Isa Mines submitted that land rights should only be granted on condition that it be allowed to build the port on Horn Islet and the road and pipelines through Borrooloola Town Common.

Justice Toohey concluded that he could not do this, as the Aboriginal Land Rights Act did not empower him to make conditional recommendations. But the company could negotiate an agreement with the land owners or possibly use the Mining Ordinance to obtain a wide passage through the Common.

No efficient way has yet been developed for extracting the metals from the ore, which is of low-grade. The project is unlikely to go ahead until extraction methods are improved or until the price of lead and zinc doubles.

However, in June 1977 MIMETS purchased the McArthur River Cattle Station, which is part of traditional Garawa and Gurdanji land. This prevented aborigines from buying the property. Furthermore in mid-May this year the company purchased Bing Bong Cattle Station, which lies to the north of Borrooloola. Since time immemorial aborigines have depended upon Bing Bong for foraging, and it contains some of the most sacred sites and ceremony ground. It also provides a link between Borrooloola Common and the Pellew Islands.

For several years the Yanyula and Mara people have been trying to buy Bing Bong Cattle Station through the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission. But they could not do this until the land claim was settled. The Land Fund Commission was not informed of the MIMETS purchase until it had been finalised and approved by the Treasurer. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Viner, knew that the company was buying Bing Bong. He delayed tabling Justice Toohey's report for over three months until 26 May; by then the purchase had been completed and it was too late for the aborigines to make a bid. Mount Isa Mines can now use the threat of ejecting aborigines from the station to pressure the traditional owners of Borrooloola Common into permitting pipelines and a road to be built on their land.

Although Mr. Viner has endorsed the recommendations that land claims be granted to Borrooloola Common and two of the Pellew Islands, he has deferred a decision on whether Mount Isa Mines should be granted an easement to allow the pipelines and road through the land. If he does grant an easement the Aborigines will be left in a powerless position in their negotiations with the mining company.

Aboriginal leaders have questioned the sincerity of the government when it permits such blatant overruling of their interests by an American-controlled mining company. Already in protest the traditional owners of Bing Bong have moved onto the Station and intend to camp there permanently.

### Effects of the Mining Project

The actions of Mount Isa Mines have increased the aborigines' fear about the McArthur River mining project. They fear that sacred sites and pathways will be disturbed. The proposed pipeline runs along the levee bank of the river, and would hinder fishing and hunting. Mount Isa Mines have claimed that the pipeline has to run along the levee as this is raised ground which does not



flood annually. However, when I inspected the route there were flood marks several feet above the ground. Dinny and Harry, two of the aborigines I went with, told me it flooded like that every year.

The black people know that too many people going through their place would be a bad thing. Already one group of miners has grabbed a woman from her hut and tried to rape her.

The people are also afraid that the mine could poison the river and kill the fish. Their fears are well-founded. The lead and zinc ores are associated with acidic sulphides which would allow them to dissolve in water. The process of extraction is likely to be only about 50% efficient, leaving large quantities of highly toxic lead and zinc behind.

Residues left after metals are extracted from the ore will be stored in a tailings dam. This is in a catchment area with underground water flow. All year round contaminated water would seep out, and under monsoon conditions the tailings dam could overflow. This would poison or contaminate the aquatic life of the McArthur River and destroy the aborigines' survival economy.

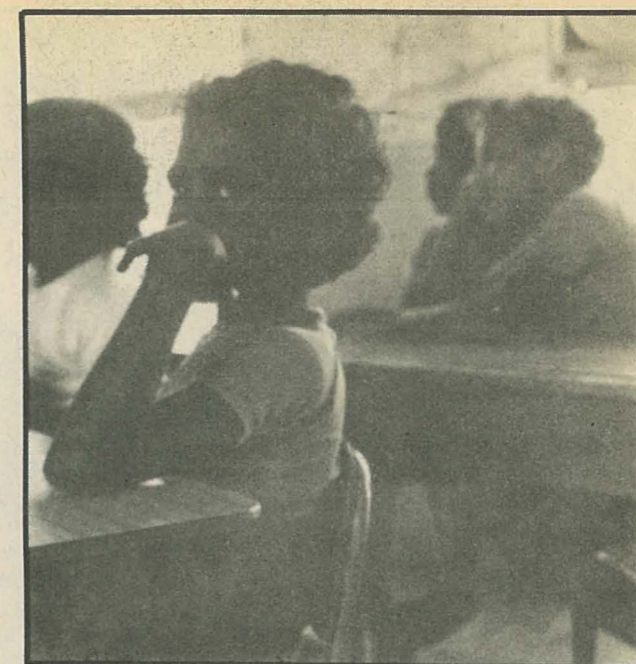
A fracture of the proposed pipelines would result in disastrous contamination. The pipelines would cross flood-prone mudflats. Recent experience with the Alaskan oil pipeline has shown that even when special precautions were taken fractures are common.

The importance of the land claims and dangers of social disruptions can best be understood in the context of the history and present lives of the Borrooloola people.

### History of Borrooloola

When the first white explorers visited Borrooloola they were presented gifts by the lively and friendly people who lived on the banks of the McArthur River. However relations changed rapidly when cattlemen took over the land and attempted to stop the traditional practice of burning off.

Aborigines killing cattle and whites stealing women were the main sources of conflict. For about forty years



the aborigines fought a bloody but uneven battle to maintain their independence. Many of them were killed in punitive raids — or just for fun. Most of the Binbinga people were exterminated in a punitive raid.

Aborigines who resisted the whites are still venerated by their descendants, and many accounts of massacres still survive. One account describes the massacre of Gurdanji people at Dungenmini (a Lightning Dreaming Site in the present McArthur River Cattle Station).

"There was a mob of Aborigines camping here in the old times, poor buggers, when Top Station was up. Frank Megan came out with pack horses plant, trailing horses and rifles. They been hunting around for people to shoot. They left their horses north of the spring and swung around the spring. They into them and shot them all. They shot the whole mob. Some fellas got out, some got up the steep cliff. The waterhole was all blood — girls, boys, old women and men were shot. They did the same all around right down to Kilgour and Amelia Springs. Frank Megan also poisoned people at Warunguri."

From the beginning of this century European dominance was largely established.

### Borrooloola Today

Most people at Borrooloola live in home-made shanties of scrap wood, corrugated iron and palm leaf shades. The various tribal groups have settled around the river, usually in the direction of their traditional lands.

Many of the adults work on cattle stations and some work as laborers for mining companies. During the wet season, when there is little paid work, most people return to the township. The major ceremonies are usually held at this time, when the necessary relatives are likely to be present.

Partly because of the seasonality of paid work people still hunt and gather food. Women and children usually hunt small game such as goannas, possums, small fish, sting ray and mudcrabs, and gather fruit, roots, palm nuts and so on. Men generally hunt larger game such as kangaroos, large turtles, dugong and barramundi.

The hunting is still carried out in a fairly traditional





way. Dogs are trained to hunt small game and burning off is used to assist in hunting. Most burning is done at the beginning of the dry season, thus preventing the damage to shoots and trees that results from bush fires later on in the year when it is hotter and drier.

Some traditional hunting practices have been modified; for example hunters might travel in a Holden car or use nails as spear heads instead of bones. However hunting is very important. The fresh vegetables and meat are more nutritious than the white flour and tinned food from the store: "Bush tucker makes you strong — you feel good. Store food makes you weak."

Hunting also enables people to preserve their independence and spiritual knowledge; particularly since creation time stories are concerned with the land and with bushcraft. Many of the blacks have detailed knowledge of plants and animals. Leo Finlay, an aboriginal community development officer, has been helping doctors at Darwin Hospital study the effects of traditional medicines.

Most blacks still feel a strong relationship to their land. Every person I met was able to specify precisely which land he belonged to, and there was virtually complete agreement as to who belonged to which areas. If the land is damaged or not cared for the people "feel sorry" for it. The depth of feeling for the land is partly derived from the people's spiritual beliefs. These differ slightly between tribes in the area, but one widespread belief concerns conception.

Before a child is conceived a father dreams about one of the spirits from the dreamtime. During this dream the "spirit child" enters into his wife. If the dream is a kangaroo dream the child will have the kangaroo as his/her own "totemic" animal. In the Borroloola region a person usually may not kill his or her own animal, and will have the responsibility of protecting the animal if it is over-hunted. People also feel some respect for their relatives' animals.

The dream often takes place at or about a sacred dreaming site on the land to which the child belongs. Thus a person sees his or her own spirit as coming from

the creation time, through the father's dream.

When a spirit dies in the creation time stories it becomes a feature of the landscape in which the spiritual presence may be felt. The stories thus create a spiritual bond to the land and give meaning to each person's life.

### The future

The people of Borroloola have managed to achieve some integration between traditional and European lifestyles. Parents usually want their children to learn white men's ways such as reading and writing. However, despite strong pressures to abandon their own culture, they also want their children to learn traditional knowledge through the creation-time stories, ceremonies and participation in everyday activities.

The stress experienced by aborigines following the white's arrival has contributed to a high level of alcohol consumption among the blacks. However the aboriginal council of Borroloola has tried to improve the situation by introducing the rule of "tucker before liquor" and forbidding drinking in the home areas.

If the aboriginal people have the opportunity to develop at their own rate and in their own way there is a good chance that they will be able to develop a healthy, intact society incorporating the traditional and the new. If too quick a rate of change is imposed there could be a complete social breakdown, generating increased feelings of hopelessness, depression and alcoholism. This could result in the loss of traditional knowledge and social organisation without providing an adequate alternative to replace them.

The purchase of Bing Bong Station would have gone a long way towards helping these people. By conniving with Mt Isa Mines to dispossess them of this land the Government is acting against their interests. Even the opportunity to own some land will not ensure the survival of aboriginal culture if the rivers and seas are poisoned with lead and zinc.

Peter Burgoyne

# Can Indians and Environmentalists find common ground?

by David Zimmerman

*Land* — the land of the Great Plains — is a central concern of American Indians and of environmentalists. Each group fears the despoilation and loss of this land. But their traditional perspectives are so profoundly different that they have ignored or opposed each other's past conservation efforts.

Now they face an overwhelming threat to the land: coal strip mining and the development of huge electric power plants on the Northern Great Plains of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and the Dakotas. This threat has led to the first hesitant step towards co-operation against the energy companies and the Federal Government which supports them: in the summer of 1976 the Northern Rockies Action Group (NRAG) held a conference in which environmentalists and Indians could organise an effective resistance. They also invited a third group — cattle graziers and farmers, who traditionally have been antagonists of Indians and environmentalists, but who now also fear that strip mining will mean the loss of their land and water, clean air and the destruction of their way of life.

A major achievement was the cordial, low-key atmosphere of the conference, in which the Indians could speak freely. NRAG staff members helped individual Indians to draft position papers, and tried to limit the number of non-Indians attending so that the Indians would not feel outnumbered. This was a new approach to encounters between Indians and non-Indians.

The Indians did not conceal their disdain for environmentalists. "I always had the notion that environmental groups were college students hustling for a reputation, or ranchers out hustling for land," said

one Indian representative. And the Northern Cheyenne tribal chairman, Allen Rowland, ventured the view that wildlife organisations "have been very hostile toward Indian causes."

Among the environmentalists were several wildlife protection groups including the Sierra Club, and Friends of the Earth. In the past these groups have always fought to increase national parks and wilderness areas.

It is these virtually uninhabited public lands to which the Indians have recently laid claim. Last year the Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth lost a contest with the Indians when Congress gave the tiny Havasupai tribe 185,000 acres of land that they wanted to be added to Grand Canyon National Park.

Taken aback by this defeat, and embarrassed by the anti-Indian image they had acquired, the environmentalists were forced to rethink their position on Indians,

whose help they want in ecological battles, and whose concern for preserving the land they admire, despite the contradictory desire to increase the public domain. The vice-chairman of the Crow tribe, Jiggs Yellowtail, caustically predicted, "You're going to go along with (us) until it hurts — and then you're going to get out."

The land, so much of which their forebears lost before they quite realized that any mortal force was large enough to take it away from them, continues to be an angry, painful issue to the Indians. They see it as their sole hope for survival. The prospects of coal strip mining on reservation land sharply aggravates their dilemma.

So much of the world's coal lies beneath those reservations that it has come to be called "Indian coal". The five reservations whose leaders came to the conference have coal deposits which may be worth hundreds of billions of dollars. Under the relatively small (455,600 acres) North Cheyenne reservation alone there are coal reserves estimated at a value of \$20 billion.

Even the fraction of this wealth that the Indians might hope to receive for the rights to mine the coal promises relief from the brutal poverty that afflicts them. But the catch is that strip mining and energy conversion plants will destroy the land surface, the water and the clean air. The influx of coal miners, construction workers etc. threatens to shatter the isolation of their reservations, their only refuges against assaults on their fragile cultures.

There is no unanimity on the reservations on how to face the temptation and threat of coal mining. At first, the coal agents were welcome, and leases were signed — at what the





Indians later perceived to be rip-off royalty rates of 17c. per ton of coal. The Indians became aware that coal development threatened their way of life and that they had, as before, been cheated on the price.

Part of the Indians' present appeal to environmentalists is for cash to support lawsuits to abrogate these agreements, on the grounds that they are detrimental to the environment — and therefore illegal. The Indians' major goal now is to regain control of coal development on and near their reservations, with the option of deciding later whether and how mining will proceed. A Northern Cheyenne observed, "Coal has been under the Cheyenne reservation a long time, and it can stay there until

we know the best thing to do."

The Indians were particularly determined to make clear to the environmentalists that they wholly own their reservation lands, as sovereigns, under treaties signed with the Federal Government. They were not inclined to discuss how their lands were to be used, either with coal companies or with environmentalists — whose penchant for habitat enhancement, game management, and sportive exploitation of wildlife they regard with distaste.

While the Indians wanted to explore legal and other strategies to keep economic interests off their land, the environmentalists seemed more interested in finding out about the Indians' protective beliefs about

the land. But few Indians were concerned about winning converts to their beliefs; they suggested merely that the land should be left alone, to let nature heal itself.

For the environmentalists there seemed to be a compelling logic — and pathos — in the Indians' self-analysis of their dependency on the reservation, and their mortal peril if the fragile balance in which they now live is suddenly disrupted by mining. As a rule, the Indians were given the worst available lands for their reservations, and since then parcels that turned out to be economically valuable have been taken away from them. And yet the reservation is a refuge. Fred Coyote, an Indian rights organizer, said: "The reservation

used to be a concentration camp. Now it's a sanctuary."

The Cheyenne have finally won control of a public school board that serves their reservation. This was a significant step, because it permits the Cheyenne to define their children's educational needs and attempt to meet them. But the total Indian population of the Northern Cheyenne reservation is only 2950 men, women and children. Development plans for the area forecast an influx of 40,000 non-Indian miners, industrial workers and their families. Indian control of the school and of all social and cultural facilities in the area, would be irrevocably lost.

Poverty, mental illness, alcoholism, and suicide prevail at epidemic levels on several reservations. Indians are strongly tempted by the immediate cash offered for coal rights and by the social service bonuses that the coal companies promise. But the cost, in increased social dislocation and aggravated identity crises, would be too great. Indian leaders see a slow nurturing of Indian self-help and self-confidence as the only practical solution to their problems.

By the second day of the conference, considerable rapport had developed among Indians, environmentalists, and farmers, but it was suddenly shattered when Allen Rowland, Northern Cheyenne tribal chairman, announced that his tribe was laying claim to half a million acres of the adjacent Custer National

Forest. He said the Cheyenne's culture was now "livestock oriented", and the Custer Forest was needed for grazing and timber land. The non-Indians were shocked and stunned. The environmentalists said they doubted if the leadership of their organizations would agree to ceding the Custer Forest, because the precedent would be a long-term threat to the public lands. For the cattle farmers the threat was more direct: several of them rely on the Custer Forest for summer grazing for their cattle, and would be forced to shut down without it.

Jiggs Yellowtail of the Crow tribe, who is a cattle farmer, suggested that environmentalists are being hypocritical if they try to deny Indians the right to compensate for the coal income, and for the needs of their growing populations, by expanding their customary pursuits, such as cattle grazing.

Some environmentalists conceded that the Custer Forest has been badly over-grazed and mismanaged by the Bureau of Land Management and the graziers who now use it. They suggested that Indian stewardship could not be much worse for the land — and might well be better.

In raising the claim, Rowland exposed the basic contradictions inherent in an Indian-environmentalist-agriculturalist coalition. All parties agreed that only a coalition of forces could stop the coal companies. But other Indians told the environmentalists that in return for co-

operation they would have to support the Cheyenne claim to Custer Forest and perhaps other claims like it. The environmentalists also would have to renounce any claims of their own to manage, use or enhance the Indian lands — which, they were told, are outside the white man's purview.

The environmentalists could envision case-by-case assessment of claims, such as the claim on Custer Forest, but did not think their national organizations were ready to relax their categorical opposition to removing land from the public domain. They did, however, offer the Indians facilities to help them raise funds for their legal battles.

The Indians stirred a sense of guilt among environmentalists who have ignored or opposed native people's claims in focusing their concern wholly on the natural, non-human environment. There was talk of appointing Indians to the boards of their national organizations, and of bringing Indians to Washington to take part in lobbying.

Environmentalists spoke enthusiastically of integrating Indian values into white America's environmental vision. The time may have come, they said, to broaden their own definitions of ecological concern to include the people who still live on the land, and depend on it for their livelihood and cultural survival.

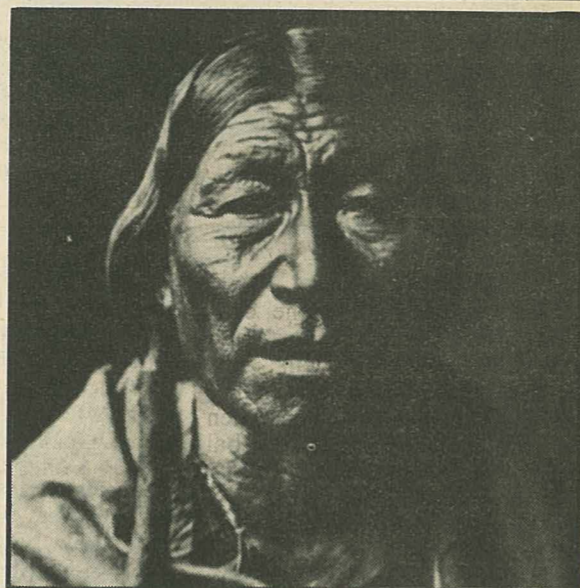
—Condensed from an article in *The PROGRESSIVE*



### "The white people never care"

"The white people never care for land or deer or bear. When we indians kill meat, we eat it all up. When we dig roots we make little holes. When we build houses, we make little holes. When we burn grass for grasshoppers, we don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood. But the white people plows up the ground, pull down the trees, kill everything. The tree says, "Don't I am sore. Don't hurt me." But they chop it down and cut it up. The spirit of the land hates them. They blast out trees and stir it up to its depths. They saw up the trees. That hurts them. The Indians never hurt anything, but the white people destroy all. They blast rocks and scatter them on the ground. The rocks say, "Don't — you are hurting me". But the white people pay no attention. . . . How can the spirit of the earth like the white man? . . . Everywhere the white man has touched it, it is sore."

— an old Wintu woman who lives in California where gold mining had torn up the earth.



### "Our land is more valuable than your money"

"Our land is more valuable than your money. It will last forever. It will not even perish by flames of fire. As long as the sun shines and the waters flow, this land will be here to give life to men and animals. We cannot sell the lives of meh and animals; therefore we cannot sell this land. It was put here for us by the Great Spirit and we cannot sell it because it does not belong to us. You can count your money and burn it with the nod of a buffalo's head, but only the Great Spirit can count the grains of sand and the blades of grass of these plains. As a present to you, we will give you anything we have that you can take with you; but the land, never."

— Chief of the Northern Blackfeet upon being asked to sign a land treaty.

## The Australian Experience

Although David Zimmermans' article was published in 1976, it is my contention that it raises a number of extremely important issues that have already surfaced in Australia, and brought into stark reality by the Northern Land Council, during the recent Borroloola Land Rights claim hearings, in the N.T. As an Aboriginal, I could re-read Zimmermans' paper and substitute the word American Indian for Australian Aboriginal, every time it appears. It is staggering that every person who has been closely involved in the

Aboriginal Land Rights movement in the Northern Territory, has made exactly the same comment about the uncanny similarity between the American Indians and Aboriginals dealings with environmentalists, even the examples he quotes can be compared with almost identical examples in the Northern Territory. We, as Aboriginals, environmentalists and other concerned groups, can take heed of the warnings expressed in the article and be aware of the interested parties' ideological differences, in order to speed up a long-awaited un-

iting of forces to establish an effective lobby against the real enemies. It CAN and MUST be done as a matter of extreme urgency. We have common interests that we want protected and we can no longer afford to perform as single units. The fact that the expansion of the mining sector "to boost the Australian economy and bring down inflation"!!? — has been given almost unconditional support by the Fraser Government, cannot be denied. This poses a devastating threat to Aboriginal Land Rights, environmentalists and even pastoralists (though the latter may be a little more difficult to persuade that this is the case — especially in relation to the poor history of their relationship to Aboriginal people).

The interests of Aboriginals, environmentalists and pastoralists complement each other in their



struggle to have their interests protected. We must all co-operate, consult and negotiate as a united front against the powers that be, in order to be EFFECTIVE and WIN.

To be more specific from the Aboriginal point of view, I wish to raise the following points and ask the reader to keep in mind Zimmermans' article.

1. The dilemma that faced the American Indians in relation to coal mining, grand promises and rip-off royalties from the multinationals, is exactly the same in principle as the dilemma currently facing the traditional owners in Arnhem Land in relation to the uranium mining.

2. An analogy can also be drawn between the attitude taken by environmentalists in the U.S.A. and the one that has been gathering unnecessary momentum in Australia. Opposition to Aboriginal Land Rights by environmentalists is not warranted. As well as formal opposition by supposed environmentalists during the Borroloola hearings and the Walpiri hearings quite a number of environmentalists have posed the following argument to me personally, "O.K.," they say, "we support Aboriginal Land Rights in principle. However, we have been led to believe that once the Aboriginals get their land, they will run cattle on the land and by doing so, will destroy the natural environment, which we want kept for the benefit of all Australians."

Well — let me point out a few facts to counteract this attitude.

- (a) The Aboriginal people lived here for in excess of 40,000 years adapting harmoniously with the environment before whites stole the land, to develop it, to make their millions of dollars and be happy.
- (b) Cattle are introduced animals.
- (c) All the best cattle country was taken by white pastoralists.
- (d) The traditional land that the Aboriginal people want back is generally considered by whites as waste-land, so white pastoralists for instance, would ever dream of running cattle on it.
- (e) The Aboriginal people want ownership of THEIR traditional lands and the RIGHT TO DETERMINE WHAT THEY WILL DO WITH IT, IN THEIR WAY.

(f) The only introduced skill that the Aboriginal people, throughout Northern Australia, were given the opportunity to develop, was how to work with cattle. The white pastoralists did very well out of the gross exploitation of their cheap labour force.

(g) If the Aboriginal people decide they want to run cattle then they should be given back the good cattle country that was literally stolen from them in the first place.

(h) If environmentalists support Aboriginal Land Rights in principle, then they are being hypocritical if they then wish to turn around and impose their conditions along with the giving back of Aboriginal land. What environmentalists need to do, is to ensure that their assumptions about Aboriginals and their treatment of the environment are backed up by empirical, scientific evidence. It is simply not good enough to make assumptions about what the Aboriginals MIGHT do with the land.

Even if there is conflict of interest between environmentalists and Aboriginals, what environmentalists have to realise, is that Aboriginal interests come second to every other interest in the N.T., and that this is why many Aboriginals lump environmentalists into the same category as miners and pastoralists etc. The only way that this will change, is when environmentalists say, "O.K., we can't convince you, but we'll support you."

It must be noted that not only do environmentalists make the comments that Aboriginals are bad conservationists, based either on tainted evidence or no evidence at all, but they also seem very reluctant to engage Aboriginals in real discussions about what they see as environmental threats. The assumption is invariably, either, that the Aboriginals would not be capable of understanding the issue, or, that they would be automatically hostile, simply because they are "bad conservationists".

In fact, Aboriginals in the Northern Territory, because they love the land, its animals and its wildlife, are particularly

interested in hearing arguments about any threat to their land, apparently caused by their actions.

If environmentalists are not prepared to do this, then they can hardly blame Aboriginals for perceiving them as just another group of racist whites, who wish to pursue their own interests, rather than acknowledge Aboriginal interests.

- (i) It cannot be stressed enough that the Aboriginal people have every right to determine their own ends, once they secure back ownership of their land through the introduced, imposed, white legal system.

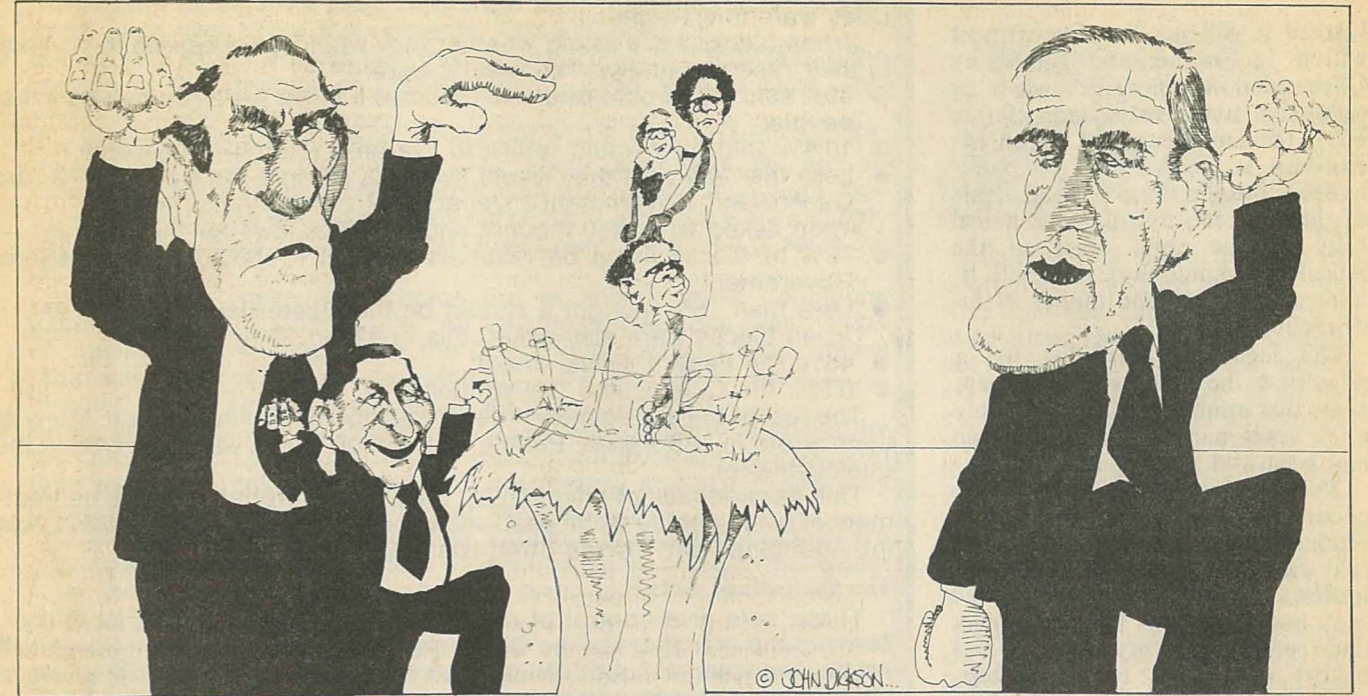
The previous caution shown by Australian environmentalists, in giving full support to Aboriginal Land Rights, may now be on the verge of changing to a more positive stance. At a recent meeting in Canberra with representatives from the Northern and Central Land Council, FCAATSI, the officers representing A.C.F. and F.O.E. displayed a very enlightened view to supporting Aboriginal Land Rights.

It is now up to other members of those organizations to follow suit. For until this is done we cannot hope to move onto bigger and better things. Another example of where constructive support should be forthcoming to Aboriginals, concerns Uluru (known generally to whites as Ayers Rock). One should literally quiver with horror when one even begins to imagine the destruction caused to the area each Australian winter when hoarding masses of tourists flock there, tramping almost everything, bar the monolith, out of existence.

These are just a few brief points that seemed relevant to raise and highlight the need for genuine unity of the concerned parties. Hopefully you will be inspired to get your priorities into order. The Aboriginal people will no longer tolerate any half-hearted gestures of support, our position must be appreciated and supported by all Australians. Steps must be taken as soon as possible to bring together Aboriginals, environmentalists, pastoralists and other common interest groups to form a united front against the real enemies.

KAMARU

## AURUKUN & MORNINGTON ISLAND



# BAUXITE 'COMPROMISE' IN THE DEEP NORTH

The people of Aurukun and Mornington Island have asked only to be left alone to determine their own future. They want the land: that is absolutely fundamental to them. They also want the right to run their own affairs, choose their own advisers and live in their own way.

However the Queensland premier, Mr Bjelke-Petersen, also wants the land that has been inhabited by the eight tribes on the Aurukun reserve for countless generations. Great deposits of bauxite, the raw material used to produce aluminium, lie directly beneath the surface of the reserve, and aluminium continues to command a high price in international markets. Mr Bjelke-Petersen is prepared to allow three totally foreign-owned companies, and one that has a 10% Australian equity, to exploit this resource, in exchange for "developing" the north of Queensland, which he sees as "wasted" because it is largely given over to aboriginal reserves and jungle.

The Aurukun dispute first surfaced in November 1975. Taking advantage of the chaotic situation when the Whitlam Government was dismissed by the Governor General, the Queensland state government rushed through a Bill giving mining rights on the reserve to a consortium calling itself "Aurukun Associates". This was during the Fraser "caretaker" government.

The companies involved are Pechiney, Billiton, Tipperary (a Texas-based company which owns over a million acres of Australian cattle-country, among other interests) and Comalco. The only one with any Australian equity at all is Comalco, which is owned mainly by Conzinc Rio Tinto and Kaiser Aluminium. Among the few Australian share-holders are Mr Bjelke-Petersen and many of his cabinet members.

The first inkling the Aurukun blacks had of this Act came via a southern aborigine, who arrived some weeks after the legislation had

been passed (Southern "shit stirrers" are not welcome on the Queensland reserves, for good reason). He had maps which showed the area formerly marked as "Aboriginal Reserve", now reclassified as "Mining Lease".

The people were angry. Prospectors working for the bauxite companies had been digging holes in the Aurukun reserve for some time (and had twice been thrown out when they interfered with sacred sites) but relations with the companies were not too bad: the companies had assured them that there was no chance of mining for 30 or 40 years, that they would be kept fully informed about it and could expect as much as 30% of the proceeds.

The aborigines had been conned. The Aurukun Associates Act gives no compensation to the local people. There is a provision in it that 3% of the profits should go to the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs; but none of this money will be likely to filter through to the Aurukun people.



Instead it will go to a Department which is feared and hated by Queensland aborigines because of its repressive treatment of blacks (see box). The Director of the DAIA Mr Killoran is known for his paternalistic attitude (to give an example of this, he recently offered a boiled lolly to the chief elder of the Aurukun community). He will be allowed to spend the money at his discretion.

The legislation provided for a refinery to be built in 1983. It appears that mining would start in only a few years, and the Aurukun people had been told nothing about it.

The Aurukun people reacted: they escorted two mining company representatives to the airstrip and told them to go. Alan Wolmby, the leader of the Peret recalled that his mob had fought off Dutch invaders once before (The story is part of oral history at Aurukun. It actually happened in the 1700's).

The blacks then called in Frank Purcell, a Melbourne lawyer, and launched an action for breach of trust against Killoran. Amazingly, they won their case in the Queensland Supreme Court. However Mr Bjelke-Petersen would not tolerate this decision: He appealed against it to the Privy Council in Britain. The ancient lords of London upheld the Queensland Government and threw out the blacks' case.

Only four weeks after the Privy Council decision, Bjelke-Petersen announced that his government was going to take over the administration of Aurukun and Mornington Island from the Uniting Church. He claimed that the Church was not only incompetent, but was also communist.

## The Church and the Outstations

This accusation requires explanation. In recent years six of the eight tribal groups living at Aurukun have moved away from the mission settlement and set up outstations on traditional land. The "outstation movement" is an important example of the revival of aboriginal customs which has been going on in the north. It also demonstrates the aborigines'

In March this year ('78) a survey was taken of aborigines living on all the major reserves in Queensland (except Edward River, where the research team was refused entry), and of urban blacks. Nine hundred and twenty-five aborigines from reserves and eight hundred and seventy-nine from cities were interviewed.

Urban blacks were asked whether they would be prepared to go back to their reserves to live. The results were:

- 69% said they would return to reserves if these were run by aboriginal people;
  - 10.4% said they would return to live on a church-run reserve;
  - Less than 4% said they would live on a reserve run by the DAIA (the Queensland Government's Department of Aboriginal Affairs).
- When asked who they thought should make laws for the reserves —
- 73% of blacks living on reserves thought it should be the Federal Government;
  - Less than 15% thought it should be the Queensland Government.
- Urban blacks were also asked this question. They replied:
- 45%: the Federal Government;
  - 0.5%: the Queensland Government.

The rest of the aborigines surveyed did not mark either option. Many of them wrote in "Aboriginal People" (an option which was not given in the questionnaire).

This marked lack of affection for the DAIA is probably due to its treatment of black people in the past, and in particular, to the Queensland Acts for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

### The Queensland Acts

These acts give control of reserves to a Manager or District Officer. Many of the managers of the Queensland reserves come from the British Army, Rhodesia or South Africa. They have wide powers over the lives of people living on reserves, for example:

- Aborigines must have permission from the Manager to go onto a reserve. The Manager can expel people who "cause trouble" even if they were born on the reserve and all their relatives live there. This power is widely used to ban Aborigines who oppose the Act from all

religious relationship with the land, and their ownership of it. The Gurindjis in the Northern Territory were only able to win land rights at Wattie Creek after they had left the white-run cattle station of Wave Hill, walked back to their traditional lands and stayed there. It took them ten years, but they won.

The Queensland Government's policy for blacks is "assimilation". It does not want to see blacks occupying vast tracts of land, and has been trying to force the Uniting Church to keep the Aurukun blacks huddled around the mission. Mr Bjelke-Petersen labels black land rights as a form of "apartheid" and would rather the aborigines lost their distinctive culture and adopted white ways. Mr Killoran did not find out about the flourishing outstation movement at Aurukun until February (1978) even though the church had made no secret of its support for the movement and had been advocating black ownership of the reserve since 1974. It took Killoran less than two weeks to arrange for the take-over of the mission.

## What about Mornington Island?

Even writers such as Cameron Forbes (Melbourne AGE) have assumed that Mornington Island was just swept up in the dispute. However Mornington Island is also administered by the Uniting Church, with its policy of decentralisation. Moreover there are large tin deposits under the island.

Mr Bjelke-Petersen's threat to take over the reserves caused an uproar. People on both sides of the political fence were shocked. Liberal Senator Neville Bonner, an aborigine, was quoted as saying that he would not trust Killoran and Porter, the Queensland minister in charge of aborigines to look after a sick dingo. The Federal Government promised to take action.

There was tense excitement among aborigines and their supporters all over Australia. Would the Queensland reserves finally be taken over? (All other states had voluntarily handed over control of aboriginal

reserves. At Mapoon in North Queensland this power was used during the '60s to round up a large community and move them. The people's homes were burnt down and they were refused permission to go back. At Mapoon wives were sent away from their husbands and children were taken away from their parents. This still goes on.

- Blacks may legally be paid less than the award wage if they are, in the opinion of the Director or District Officer, aged, sick or slow. This power is widely used.
- At Yarrabah Reserve in 1973, cooks got \$10 a week, handymen \$8, tractor-drivers \$10, mechanics \$22, office assistants \$8 etc. In December 1975, when average Australian weekly earnings were over \$160 per week, the average weekly earnings at Aurukun were still only \$35. If an employer pays more, the Government is entitled to seize the difference.
- The aborigines have little choice but to accept these conditions because of by-laws such as this: "All able-bodied persons over the age of fifteen years residing within the Community/Reserve shall, unless otherwise determined by the Manager, perform such work as is directed by the Manager or person authorised by him."
- About half the blacks in Queensland have their property managed by the Queensland Government. They cannot withdraw any money from their wages or bank account without permission, and are usually only allowed to withdraw a very small amount at a time.
- The Director may invest their money, kept in a Trust Fund, but they are only credited with the equivalent of Savings Bank interest (the lowest rate): the difference goes into a general community "welfare" fund, under the Director's control.
- As well, there is a special legal system for reserves. By-laws, approved by the Director, can cover matters as minor as having a dirty dustbin. The Manager can detain anyone without formal charge. In some areas the District Officer is the Clerk of Courts, the police representative, and also hears appeals.
- These are some of the provisions of the Acts which stand out. There are many more petty restrictions in them.

—Information from the Australian Union of Students

reserves to the Federal Government long ago — Queensland is the only state still governing them with its own archaic laws).

Under the Australian Constitution the Federal Government is allowed to acquire land on "just terms" — but there would be a High Court battle if the Government had no desire to antagonise Bjelke-Petersen and the West Australian premier, Sir Charles Court, who is equally enthusiastic about mineral development (at the expense of aborigines) and would regard compulsory acquisition of land with minerals on it as criminal, and a dangerous precedent. Mr Viner, Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, was despatched to Queensland to negotiate with the intransigent Bjelke-Petersen. Mr Viner was soon back, announcing that he had reached a compromise with the crusty old Queenslanders. It became apparent, however, that the only person who had been doing any compromising was Viner. He had given in entirely to Bjelke-Petersen. The Prime Minister was angered by this obvious blunder and repudiated

Viner's compromise. To show his sincerity and keep the good publicity coming in he had to take action. Thus on April 5, legislation enabling the Federal Government to take over the reserves was rushed through Parliament. The legislation allows the Government to take over the management of aboriginal reserves when requested to by an aboriginal council or a majority of adults on the reserve. The reserve would then be run by an elected council of aborigines. "If necessary" the Federal Government could acquire the land to achieve this. However, the legislation gave no guarantee of land rights, and none that the Government actually would take over the reserves when requested.

Bjelke-Petersen soon seized upon the opportunity of foiling the legislation by abolishing the aboriginal reserves of Aurukun and Mornington Island. They reverted to the status of crown land. The Queensland minister for "Aboriginal and Islander Advancement", Mr Porter, described the move as a revocation of the aborigines'



"privileges". In fact it reduced the aborigines to a state in which they were squatters, liable to be moved on at any time. However this is basically not far from the position they were in all along. Only the churches protected them, and not all churches were like the Uniting Church. At least the aborigines were now freed from the repression of the Queensland Acts controlling Aborigines and islanders on reserves.

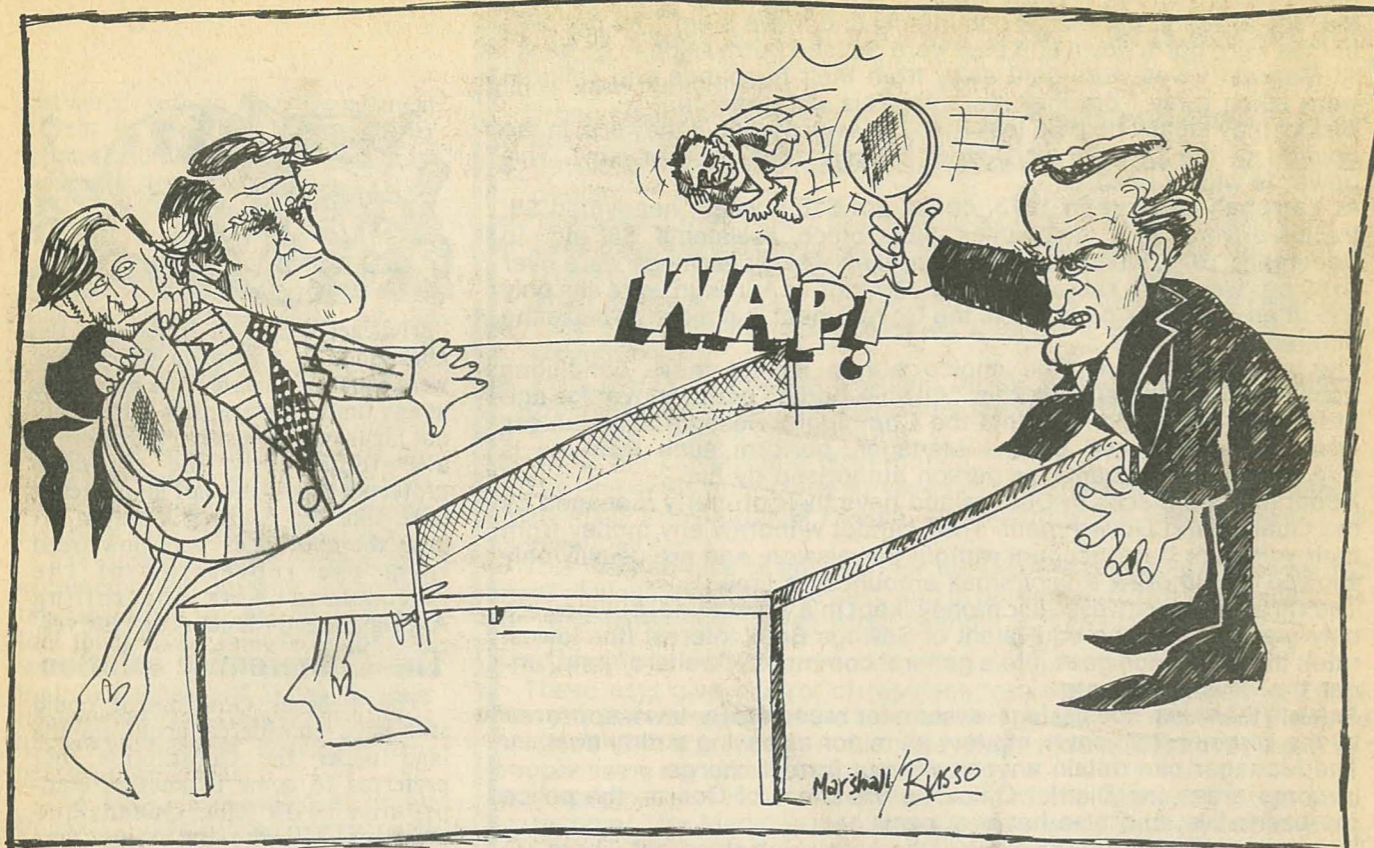
## The Compromise solution

The Federal Government could still have considered acquiring the land under the Constitution, but preferred to come to another compromise with the Queensland premier. Bjelke-Petersen was allowed to hang on to the land, but the reserves have become local government areas and have been granted special leases.

In the past the Queensland Government has dismissed the Gold Coast local government council and threatened the Brisbane Council. It is quite capable of dismissing the Aurukun and Mornington Island councils, or revoking their leases. Real control over the reserves will probably lie with the "advisory committee", comprising representatives of "services" (presumably schools, the law etc) and a member of Pat Killoran's Department, the DAIA. The blacks and the Uniting Church are bitterly disappointed. In the words of Mick Miller of the North Queensland Land Council "We want the Federal Government to take over all reserves and missions in Queensland. Aboriginal people want land rights and self-determination. No compromises with the Bjelke-Petersen Government are acceptable."

The first meeting of the new Aurukun local council gave ominous warning of things to come. The aborigines had decided to appoint Mr. Tony Morris, of the Uniting Church, as Shire Clerk. The Queensland local government minister, Mr. Hinze, would not let





## PING PONG POLITICS in the DEEP NORTH

them appoint Mr. Morris. He claimed the man was "not qualified". Privately he told Mr. Morris, "I'm running this show. Understand that."

Throughout the dispute, the Federal Government has appeared as the champion of black rights, by contrast with the rabid Bjelke-Petersen. But how was a secure Federal Government trounced by the premier of one of the smaller states, with only 34% backing among his own voters, and suspected of being somewhat mentally unbalanced? The role of the Federal Government, Mr Viner in particular, should not be allowed to go unquestioned.

A few months before the dispute erupted Mr Viner authorised a submission for abolishing the Aboriginal Land Fund. The Land Fund was set up under the Whitlam Government to buy back land for aboriginal communities (there is no other way they can be given land rights in the States). Mr Fraser and Mr Viner have since denied that they were planning to get rid of the Land Fund, but the evidence is there. Mr Viner has also prevented Professor Rowley, head of the Land Fund, and Al Grassby, from suing Bielke-

Petersen for racial discrimination (Mr Bjelke-Petersen refuses to allow land in his state to be transferred into the names of aboriginal communities, even when the land has already been paid for).

Mr Viner was active during the dispute, attempting to water down the legislation for acquiring reserves. He instructed his Department not to design the legislation to "take over the reserves or acquire them on behalf of the aborigines" but merely to strengthen the structure of the aboriginal councils (— Paul Kelly, *National Times*, 3-8/4/78).

This fits in well with his attempt to "compromise" with Bjelke-Petersen. Did the Federal Government ever have any intention of taking over the reserves? Or was the whole thing just a publicity exercise?

### A Reply to The Miners

While blacks in Queensland still suffer under the Queensland Acts — the mining industry council bleats about "special privileges" and discrimination in favour of blacks. In the business pages of *The Age*, economics writer Tony Thomas replied to the miners in these terms:

"In 1974 Professor R.M. Berndt

put the typical age at which Aboriginal females were first violated by whites at seven years. Dr Frank Stevens says in his book, *Aborigines in the N.T. Cattle Industry*, published in 1974, that the age of first violation would have since risen only slightly."

Brian Toohey of the *Financial Review* reported on 7th April this year:

"The joke of the night at the mining industry's annual dinner in Canberra this year had as its main gag line the fact that a gorilla was mistaken for an Aboriginal in a fur coat."

The author of this obscenity was the Queensland Minister for Mines. Toohey politely omitted the part about the mistaken identity resulting in the rape of the gorilla.

If you are feeling a little sick in the stomach, just remember that Queensland blacks are ruled by these racists. The people up there are fighting for basic human rights. What about a bit of support?

Barbara Hutton and Lyndon Shea.

Contact: Lyndon Shea, Campaign Against Racial Exploitation, 22 Smith St., Collingwood.

# URANIUM MINING AT KAKADU WHERE LAWS FALL DOWN

## THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW

15c\*

1944, Melbourne 602 3033, Perth 321 8217

TUESDAY, APRIL 4, 1978

Canberra 73 1445, Adelaide 51 6422, Brisbane 221 6266

CONFIDENTIAL  
DRAFT ONLY

A BILL  
FOR  
AN ACT

To amend the  
*Atomic Energy Act 1953.*

The leaked bills

Here is  
the news...  
from  
Friends of  
the Earth.

By FRED BRENCHLEY  
THE Fraser Government's  
proposed Freedom of In-  
formation Act is not yet  
law, but the system is  
working very well without  
it.

Yesterday the Friends of  
the Earth handed newspapers  
two press releases on the  
Federal Government's forth-  
coming package of legislation  
on its new uranium powers.  
But the releases were  
backed up by photostats of  
two pieces of the Govern-  
ment's new legislation, both  
stamped "confidential" and  
"draft only."

Criticism of the recent legislation on uranium mining has primarily focussed on the sweeping powers it gives the Commonwealth Government.

The Environment (Nuclear Codes) Act allows a government minister to assume virtually unlimited powers for up to six months where there is a nuclear danger to the environment. Furthermore, contrary to the recommendations of the Ranger Environmental Inquiry, the Atomic Energy Act has been applied to the commercial mining of uranium. This Act was passed in 1953 during the height of the Cold War when it was feared that Russian spies might steal the secret of how to make atomic bombs. Among other things it provides for up to 20 years imprisonment for anyone who releases "restricted information", which in the context of the Ranger uranium mining project could refer to revealing details about pollution from the mine.

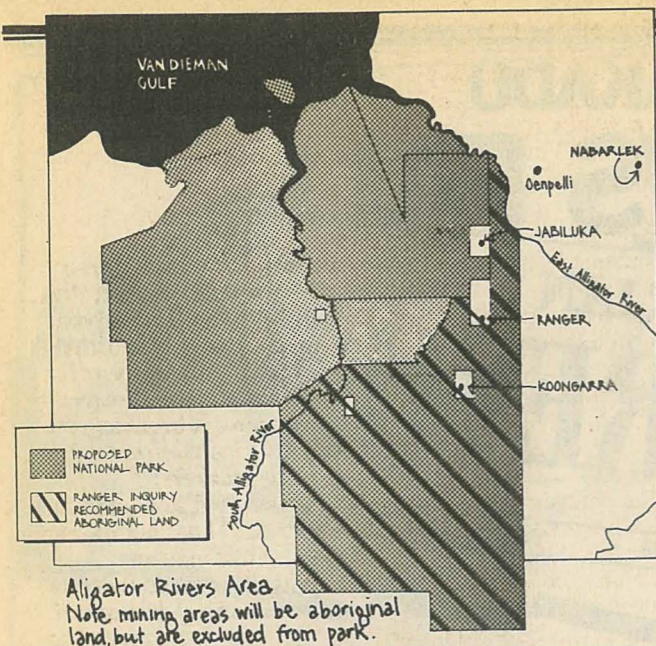
The Ranger Inquiry found that there were traditional aboriginal owners to the Alligator Rivers Region and that it should be granted to them but that in view of its outstanding environmental importance it should be managed as a national park. Before mining started the mining companies would have to reach an agreement with the traditional owners. The report of the Ranger Inquiry recommended strict measures to prevent the release of contaminants to the atmosphere and water system.

To give effect to this the Government has recently passed amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, and three Environment Protection Acts (Northern Territory Supreme Court, Alligator Rivers Region and Nuclear Codes). However, inspection of these indicates that many of the recommendations have either been ignored or seriously weakened.

### Mining on Aboriginal Land

While not preventing mining on aboriginal land, The Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1976) provides for negotiations between the aboriginal land owners (represented by their Land Council) and the mining companies before mining can go ahead. The Northern Land Council has





tried to prolong negotiations and has attempted to ensure that the Ranger Inquiry environmental recommendations will be carried out: especially that the uranium tailings (crushed toxic waste left after mining) be returned to the mining pits after the project is finished. However, the Government amendments seriously weaken the aborigines' position, since if they cannot reach an agreement with the mining companies the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs can, after appointing an arbitrator, impose whatever conditions he sees fit.

The aborigines' position has been further weakened because due to Government delay the land in question is not yet officially aboriginal land.

### National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act.

A structure for setting up national parks and applying a plan of management is provided by this Act. Under it mining can be carried out after only after a special proclamation by the Governor-General and provided it conforms with the plan of management.

Although the amendments to this Act allow the Northern Land Council to make comments on the plan of management, the aborigines have no final say on it (even though the park will officially belong to them).

The act also specifies that where land is granted to the Aborigines in the area, it **must** be leased to the Director of Parks and Wildlife. The aborigines cannot refuse to lease the land as a park; if they do so an agreement can be forced on them.

In August 1977 the Government promised that a Kakadu National Park would be set up along the lines recommended by the Ranger Report. However, the amendments provide that Kakadu region be declared a "conservation zone . . . until it is practicable to declare the area to be a park or reserve". Unlike a national park a conservation zone would not have a plan of management. A Proclamation would not be required to permit mining to take place in a conservation zone. Moreover, unlike the situation in a national park, there is no provision for the prohibition of pollution in a conservation area: it can only be "regulated". Thus, until the area is declared a national park, control of mining and pollution

in the region will be seriously weakened.

The Director of National Parks and Wildlife can regulate mining activities with in a national park. However, mining leases are specifically excluded from the national park. The Director can take out an order against the mining companies only if the national park is affected. The Ranger Report recommended that the mining companies should deposit a large fund to pay for any environmental damage caused. This has been ignored by the Government.

### The Environment Protection (Northern Territory Supreme Court) Act:

Gives the Aboriginal Land Council and the Director of Parks and Wildlife legal standing so that they can get a court order forcing the miners to stay within the mining regulations and to stick to the agreement made with the land council and stay within the plan of management.

The powers of the Director of Parks and Wildlife under this Act are limited because the mining areas are not technically within the park. They have been deliberately excluded from it.

### The Environment Protection (Alligator River Region) Act

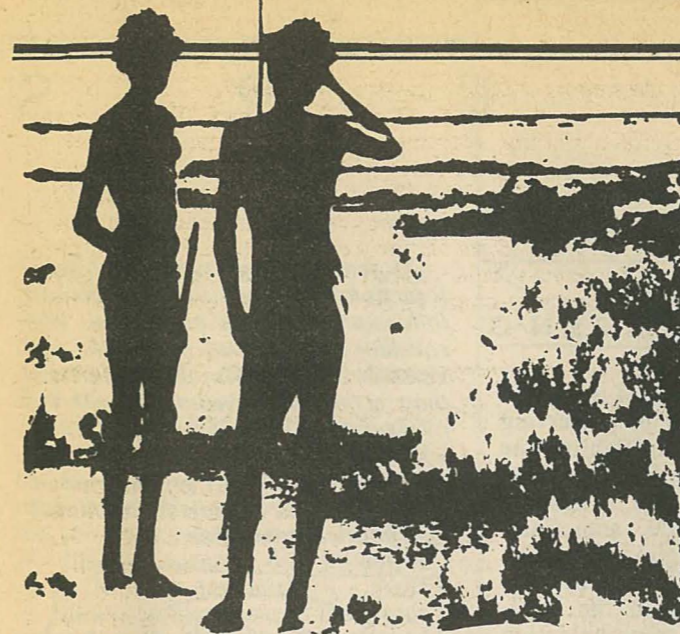
This Act provides for the appointment of a Supervising Scientist to be responsible for establishing standards and monitoring radiation, environmental pollution and its effects. The Ranger Report found that the Atomic Energy Commission, because of its interest in the development of a nuclear industry was not competent to perform this independent supervision. However, instead of appointing an independent reputable radiation biologist as Supervising Scientist, the Government has appointed Mr. R. M. Fry, of the pro-nuclear Atomic Energy Commission. Mr Fry opposed many of the recommendations of the Ranger Inquiry. Now he is in charge of seeing that they are carried out.

The Act establishes a co-ordinating committee consisting of the Supervising Scientist, the Director of National Parks and Wildlife and representatives with an interest in uranium mining operations in the region. The Ranger inquiry specified that the NLC should be included. The act does not mention them. The committee has powers to consider research programs and review mining practices. But the committee can only make recommendations to the Supervising Scientist. Since the Supervising Scientist is known to be against many of the measures proposed to protect the environment the committee has been effectively emasculated before it has even met.

### Environment Protection (Nuclear Codes) Act.

This act provides for the creation of codes of practice on all stages of the nuclear fuel cycle **including the disposal of nuclear waste and the operation of nuclear facilities.** It has already been severely criticised by the state governments including the Victorian, West Australian, and Queensland governments for provisions that override state powers.

Only one of the codes that will be proclaimed under the Nuclear Codes act exists at the moment: The Code of Practice on Radiation Protection in the Mining and Milling of Radioactive Ores, compiled by the health depart-



ment. The Ranger inquiry recommended that this code become mandatory, as the act provides. It has been argued by FOE that the code of practice would be breached by Pancontinental and even more by Queensland Mines because of the high grade ore, climatic conditions, and the shape of the open cuts, (see

"Uranium mining legal?" in CR3/4). This is particularly disturbing since under the Atomic Energy Act, normal environmental and health standards would not apply in the mining lease area, and operations would not be open to public scrutiny.

### Secrecy Provisions

Included in the Acts are secrecy provisions which make it illegal for the Director of Parks and Wildlife, the Supervising Scientist, and their staff, as well as anyone from the Northern Land Council to disclose any information about the mining operations under a penalty of a \$1,000 fine or six month's imprisonment. These secrecy provisions will apply even if the company is breaking the law, or mining regulations, and would include release of information about the health of mineworkers.

The Ranger site will become a prohibited area, and no unauthorised person will be allowed in. Thus the mining operations will be concealed from public scrutiny.

In Conclusion the legislation fails to protect the environment from the polluting effect of mining. It does not set up a Kakadu National Park, and makes the prospect of a park even more remote. The secrecy provisions and lack of effective independent monitoring means that uranium miners will be able to break regulations with impunity.

Research by John Hallam

## LAND COUNCILS AND URANIUM MINING

The following statement is reprinted in full from the Central Land Council's *Land Rights News* No. 10, June 1978:

Some pretty heavy attacks have been levelled at the Northern Land Council recently. Anti-uranium groups have accused the Northern Land Council of giving in to uranium mining. We regard these criticisms of our northern colleagues as unfair and ill-informed.

When the land rights campaign was being waged, it is true that Aborigines sought support from groups all over Australia. That support from white groups was both necessary and greatly helpful. But the support was always sought on the basis that traditional owners should at last be able to make their own decisions about their land.

The most crucial issue facing Aboriginal people is the potentially and proven, destructive effect of mining. No royalty cheque can compensate for the destruction of land, culture and community life.

But if Aboriginal people do not always say 'no' to mining, whether uranium or whatever the mineral, then supporters who turn on those

people are no different to those who were always opponents.

What options does the Northern Land Council have about negotiating with uranium companies? They have got expressed opposition to the mining from most traditional owners but if they are to take militant action in accordance with traditional owners' wishes then **real** support will be necessary from interstate groups. There has been precious little real support to date.

If the Northern Land Council were to pull out of negotiations, the Government would step in and impose an agreement, inevitably with less safeguards than the Northern Land Council could obtain. And what would be the result? Would that action by Northern Land Council precipitate the end of uranium mining? Apart from words, what support could they expect from the anti-uranium movement?

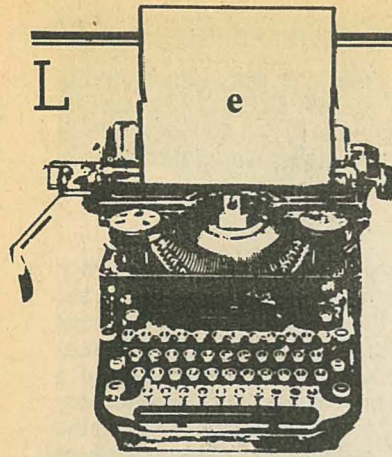
Both Galarrwuy Yunupingu and Wenten Rubuntja are opposed to uranium mining. But neither of them can take a position which appeared to impose their will on other Aboriginal people. That right of traditional owners to make their own decision is fundamental to land rights. Yet this point is constantly ig-

nored by the anti-uranium movement. They insist that Galarrwuy and Wenten should make statements and take actions which deny the right to other Aboriginal people to make up their own minds. The pressure on these two leaders is very great and it comes from all directions.

Conservationists who assume that their opinion must be followed, do not realise that many denials of Aboriginal wishes have been made in the name of conservation. To many Aborigines, the refusal of the anti-uranium movement to understand the subtleties of their predicament, put those people in exactly the same category as the mining companies i.e. white people who support Aborigines only so long as they agree with them. Yet very little has been done to give Aboriginal people the information and assistance they need to make informed decisions.

It is too easy to regard the question of Aborigines and uranium mining in simplistic terms. It is about time the anti-uranium movement offered some positive assistance. The abuse only alienates Aborigines and creates absurd divisions which the mining companies are only too quick to exploit.





C H I N A

I personally found Ian Pausacker's article, "China, Environmentalists Dream?" (CR 3/2) interesting and informative. My own view is that whilst China has emerged from much harsher, and up to a point incomparable historical circumstances to a highly industrialised society, that is no excuse for upholding China as being a viable alternative to capitalism. (I'm a libertarian socialist.)

Undeniably China has come a long way since 1949; there is no easy solution to the many problems of that country. However to have illusions that China's social and political system is morally superior is downright ridiculous. I would like to ask apologists for China whether they are really friends of the Earth. Consider this:

The New China News agency said that the twenty-second (my emphasis) atmospheric nuclear test (17/9/77) "was a victory anew achieved by the workers, commanders and fighters of the Chinese People's Liberation (!) Army, scientists, technicians and revolutionary cadres engaged in research, manufacture and testing of nuclear weapons."

Last year China irradiated the world's working class — and bourgeoisie — four times. China is the only country still conducting atmospheric nuclear tests. An unbiased person can, in all fairness, only conclude that China, like the rest of the world (whether "democratic" or "communist") is still a hierarchical society, and there is no reason to suggest that the rulers have any intention of altering this. Real human liberation has yet to occur on this planet. People will have to design a model of it themselves and alter structures radically if we wish to survive and see better days.

Q. May, Unley S.A.

CARTOONS  
"DOWNRIGHT  
EMBARRASSING"

Dear Friends,

I believe that Friends of the Earth does an essential job in preserving our environment and in fighting the case for conservation; however, I do have a criticism. The magazine CHAIN REACTION sometimes looks more like an immature leftist university rag or TRIBUNE (a communist newspaper) than the hard-hitting ecological communication device it should be. Let us not equate socialism with ecology. Labor's "honour thy contracts" is a case in point. The picture of fat capitalists in top hats doing naughty things (and similar cartoons) I found not only puerile but downright embarrassing. When I receive a copy of CHAIN REACTION I want something I can show to someone and say, "Read this!" I don't want them to dismiss it as a kids' paper.

As another matter of interest, my comments on FOE are not those of a wealthy do-gooder capitalist. The comments come from a middle class (like the majority of Australians) "restricted free-enterprise" (and not "free for all") political activist. I am a member of a party that as a matter of urgency and priority conducted a ballot on uranium and as a result stands against mining it. I'm an Australian Democrat, neither left nor right.

Keep up the good work and maybe we can save the environment and therefore humanity. Yours in friendship with the earth,

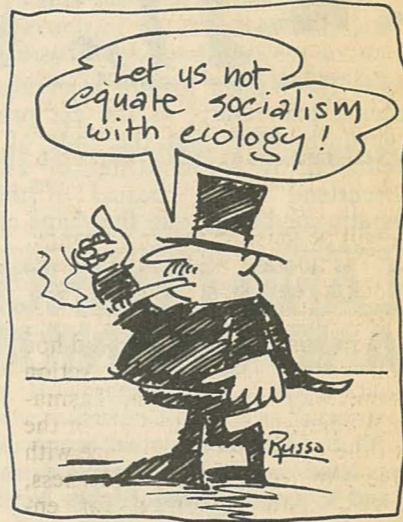
Peter Markham.

P.S. I hope you don't mind my rather long and critical letter but I have been a member for some time and feel that I should let you know how at least one of FOE's members feels.

*According to the artist, who claims to be an avowed capitalist and great believer in free enterprise, the cartoons in question are meant as a comment on the EXCESSES of capitalism and materialistic values, made in a humorous and absurd way.*

*Cartoonists should be given the freedom to express their own feelings.*

*As for the suggestion that Chain Reaction is a socialist rag, we do not follow any political party line. We consider people's welfare and the environment to be more important than economic development for its own sake — if that is socialism, then what is wrong with socialism? We do not think there is any great virtue in always being in the middle on moral and political questions.*



ECOFEMINISTS  
UNITE

Until I moved to Tasmania a few months ago, my experience of environmental groups had been limited to Friends of the Earth (Sydney). That experience had been very pleasant. It had been obvious that most of the activists in FOE (Sydney) were male, but I found most of them joyfully non-oppressive. The same goes, as far as I'm concerned, for FOE (Victoria). FOE (Australia) is for me an ideal movement of people who are deeply concerned about the environment but who also think about the nature of the society that we are protecting the environment for.

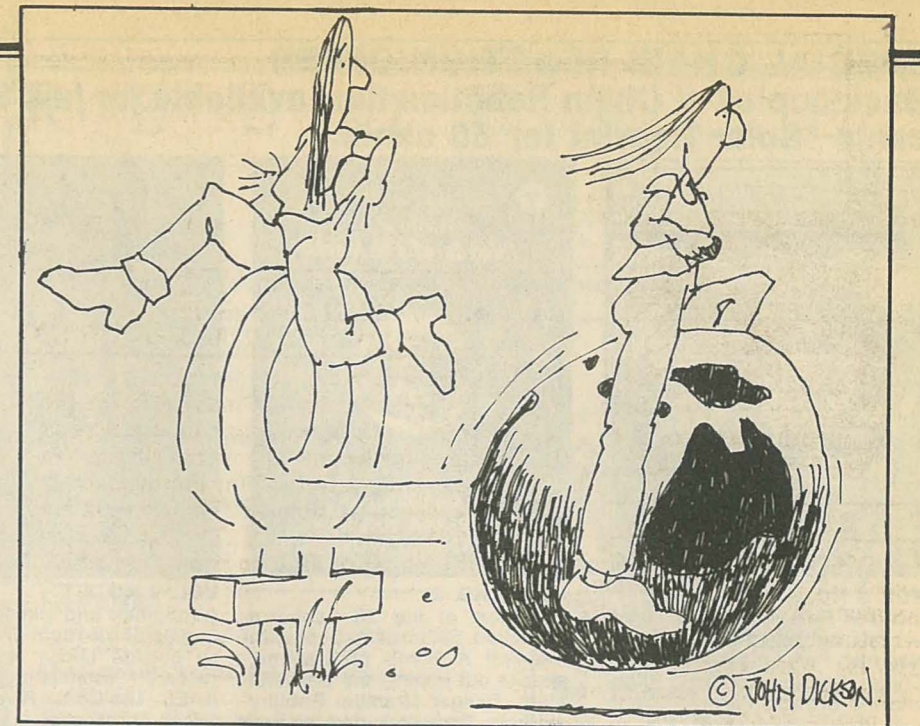
Unfortunately there are other environment groups in Australia which aren't quite as liberated. Take for example MAUM, which tends to reflect the authoritarian structures of its member organizations (trade unions, churches, academics...). I was present at the national MAUM meeting in February and saw them running the meeting with boring,

alienating, business-type meeting procedures. Such complicated structures are the most alienating for those who are newest to activism, and to a large extent this means women.

When I brought up the issue at a state Uranium Moratorium meeting in Hobart in connection with nominations for a steering committee, the same old arguments came up — "that's reverse discrimination...", "is there any need?..." Note — these comments came from men only. Another woman present stood up for me, saying that I had raised the point at a good moment and that it would encourage other women to speak up if they were shy. Women really do feel stronger if they know they will be listened to for a change.

In Tasmania I've found (at last) the ocker environmentalists!! The environmental movement here has until now consisted of several ad hoc action groups (South-West Action Committee, Project Jonah, Tasmanian Wilderness Society etc). For the first time I've come face to face with people who are into, say, wilderness, which is quite advanced for environmentalists, but who are at the same time conservative and socially/politically unaware. The number of 'ecofeminists' down here is very small. It takes a bit of getting used to after the heady, supportive atmosphere of the other FOE groups, and I'm drawing much-needed support from other feminists. In the process I'm meeting a depressing number of feminists who have no great awareness of environmental issues. The lack of analysis occurs in both circles. I think it's time that women in the environment and feminist movements consider putting much more effort into bringing the two camps together. After all, aren't we all going in the same direction?

The environment movement, as I have come to know it, is searching for a sustainable society which lives in harmony with nature rather than seeking to subdue and exploit it. Is it mere coincidence that the institutions which are most actively engaged in plundering the earth's resources happen to be controlled by men? Men seem to be suited to these hierarchical organizations. The few



women who have 'made it' to the top have had to learn to be aggressive and dominant i.e. they have had to assume the roles normally assigned to men. If all people learnt to be non-oppressive would the multi-national corporations and exploitative governments survive?

Feminists are trying to teach people to reject our patriarchal society's allocation of sex roles, and moving towards the liberation of all people. The environment movement is trying to teach people to be more aware of their environment, to wake up to the plight of planet earth. If the environment movement is encouraged to look at the total environment, the socio/political areas of oppression and exploitation in human relationships will come in for much greater depth of analysis.

The best way to ensure that feminism participates in the structuring of alternatives is to encourage many more women to become active in the environment movement. (Repeat this sentence swapping feminism and the environment movement.) How are we to do it? I have a few thoughts on it, but would really like contact with other ecofeminists.

- Be more supportive to women already involved in the movement. Discuss the problem with them. If they're feminists, you'll get amazing support returned. If not, it's as good a place as any to start a bit of consciousness-raising. The same goes for other men in the movement.
- Be supportive to women who turn

up for the first time. Make a special effort to make them feel at home. This of course should be practised already by good organisers, but it is especially important when teaching skills to women, who often have less self-confidence than men. Men in particular must learn the patience which women have been taught all their lives.

- Write articles for feminist and environmental magazines.
- Bring the issue up whenever you feel someone is standing on your head:

"... i said, you step on my head for 27 years you step on my head and though i have been trained to excuse you for your inevitable clumsiness today i think i prefer my head to your clumsiness ..."

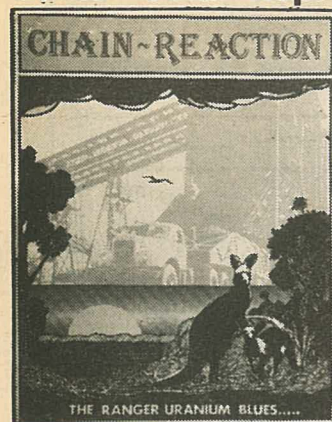
—from 'For Witches', by Susan Sutheim.

- Encourage the adoption of collective-type structures which the women's movement has found discourages centralization of power, and aren't as frightening to newcomers.
- Keep in touch with other ecofeminists. Perhaps we could set up an Australia-wide communication system?
- Or — listen to Malvina Reynolds records and feel good and forget all about this "divisiveness".

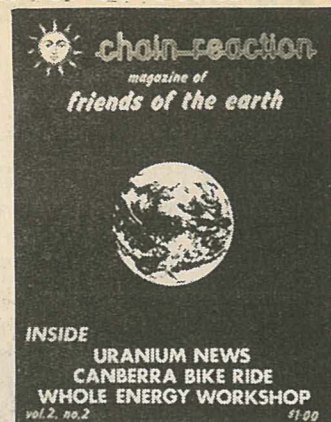
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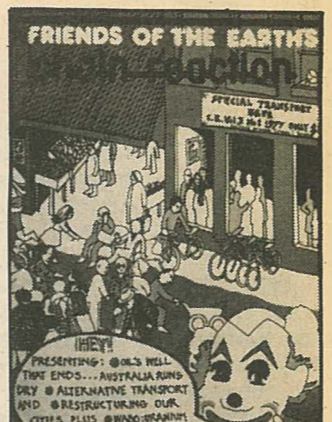
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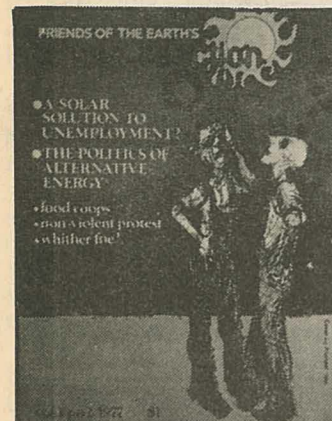
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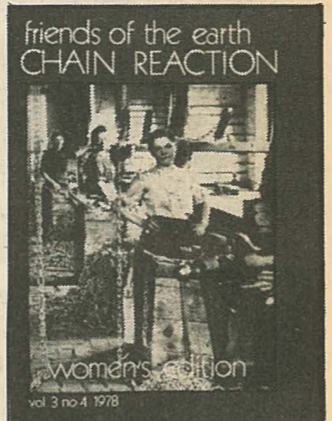
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**URANIUM: CITIZENS' RESPONSE**



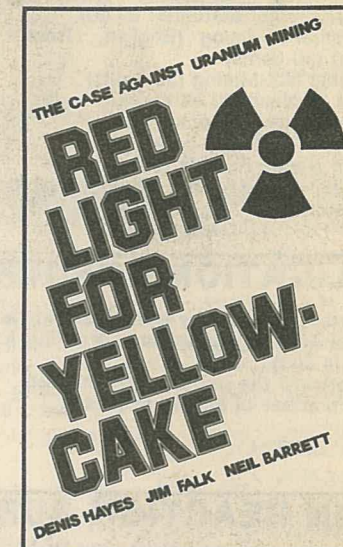
- Rebuttal of government's case for mining and export of uranium  
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- 1 URANIUM MINING AND NUCLEAR POWER
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  - 5 URANIUM MINING Negation of Land Rights
  - 6 ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF URANIUM MINING
  - 7 URANIUM Questions and Answers

Papers prepared by members of:  
 • Movement Against Uranium Mining, 277 Brunswick St., Fitzroy, Victoria 3061. Phone (03) 449 4427.  
 • Friends of the Earth, 51 Nicholson St., Carlton, Victoria 3053. Phone (03) 347 2606  
 • Campaign Against Mining Aboriginal Lands, 21 South St., Fitzroy, Victoria. Phone (03) 449 5152

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STARTS OTHER SIDE



AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME, AN EARLY MAN DIGS THE FIRST HOLE...

**THE FIRST MINER !!!**

WITH HIS SIMPLE WOODEN SPADE, THIS EARLY MAN HAD UNEARTHED THE ROCK WHICH WOULD MAKE THE FIRST WEAPON.!!

THIS WAS TO LEAD TO THE FIRST BUSINESS TAKEOVER...

AND THUS CIVILIZATION WAS WELL UNDER WAY...

TODAY, OF COURSE, CIVILIZATION HAS BECOME MUCH MORE SOPHISTICATED...

THIS IS **LANG HANCOCK** — A DESCENDANT OF THE FIRST MINER

ALSO, SELF-APPOINTED PROTECTOR OF SOCIETY (AS WE KNOW IT)

AAAHH... NOTHING LIKE A LUNG FULL OF FRESH AIR IN THE MORNING... MMM — I CAN EVEN SMELL THE ASBESTOS FROM THE BRAKE LININGS OF THE TRAFFIC.!

AS LANG TURNS THE PAGE...

GOD! DON'T THOSE FOOLS REALISE THAT THEY'RE STANDING IN THE WAY OF PROGRESS?!

— AND SO BEGINS THE ADVENTURE WHICH WE CALL

# LANG VS THE ECO-NUTS

LISTEN, CHARLIE — I GOT A PLAN TO SHORT-CIRCUIT THOSE **MARXIST** RATBAGS.!!

WITHIN SECONDS, LANG DIALS HIS DIRECT LINE TO SIR CHARLES COURT...

SOME HOURS LATER, AT A BUSINESSMEN'S LUNCHEON IN PERTH...

... AND I TELL YOU, GENTLEMEN, THIS WHOLE OIL CRISIS IS DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE EFFECT THESE ECO-NUTS'VE HAD IN AMERICA...

CONT'D ON ?