

Aborigines of Australia Are Suddenly Militants

By ROBERT TRUMBULL
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SYDNEY, Australia, Jan. 23
—The sudden emergence of a militant black-power movement among dissatisfied young aborigines is stirring Australia.

Incidents attributed to black-power movements have occurred recently in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Alice Springs.

Activism among the descendants of the original inhabitants of Australia has been thinly based and muted until now. But it attracted nationwide attention recently when a Cabinet Minister in Melbourne and a Senator in Brisbane disclosed that they were under police protection because of reported threats attributed to black-power groups.

Federal authorities said that the same protection had been extended to others on what they said was a black-power "death list."

Have Self-Help Projects

The Cabinet member, Peter Howson, is the Minister in Charge of Aboriginal Affairs. The Senator, Neville Bonner, is the first aboriginal member of the Australian Parliament. Others said to have been threatened were not named.

Mr. Bonner, a Brisbane carpenter and politician who was appointed to fill a vacancy in the Senate last year, has been called an Uncle Tom by black-power activists, who say he is one of the "blacks who have been taught to think like whites."

According to a black activist, Evonne Goolagong, the part aboriginal tennis player who won the women's singles championship at Wimbledon last year, is in the same category.

The activists, many of whom describe themselves as radicals, are running numerous self-help



The Sydney Morning Herald

Peter Howson



Associated Press

Neville Bonner

projects and are organizing the first black political party in Australia.

"There are constituencies where a black political party could swing the balance," a young aboriginal leader said here the other day. "We will go to the highest bidder."

The black-power movement here, like its counterpart in the United States, stresses a revival of cultural identity and independent social development outside the white society. Possibilities of violence growing out of the movement in Australia are not discounted.

Prominent figures in black-power circles have dissociated themselves from the reported

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threats against Mr. Howson and Senator Bonner. Paul Coe, a 23-year-old Sydney activist, declared that the episode was part of "a police plot to discredit the whole movement."

Mr. Coe, a law student at the University of New South Wales who hopes to become "the first aboriginal lawyer," nevertheless asserted in an interview that "violence is inevitable" in the "upward struggle of the aborigines."

Longstanding social grievances of the 140,000 or so aborigines against the rest of Australia's 12 million people have been exacerbated recently by official rejection of tribal land claims.

"We repudiate the Government position that the aborigines belong to the land, but the land doesn't belong to the aborigines," said Mike Anderson, another young activist.

The aborigines are a dark-skinned people with negroid features. Their forebears are believed to have come from Southeast Asia by a land bridge that disappeared when the oceans rose at the end of the ice age 25,000 years ago.

Since the British navigator, Capt. James Cook, claimed Australia for the British crown in 1770, the history of the

aborigines has been marred by massacre, oppression and neglect at the hands of whites.

Although the Government now allocates more than \$35-million a year for aboriginal welfare, the community lags badly in health and education and leads in poverty and crime. Infant mortality among aborigines is put at six times the rate among white Australians.

Mr. Coe and Mr. Anderson say they know "about 300" other young aboriginal activists.

These men form a "new wave" of vigorous leadership in their race, according to the Rev. Ted Noffs, of the Wayside Chapel, a Methodist social work center involved in projects with aborigines here.

These activists have no offices or formal organization, but there is another aboriginal group that calls itself the Black Panthers and imitates the Afro haircut and other badges of the American Negro movement of that name.

"We would alienate our own people if we copied the American blacks," Mr. Coe said in an interview, although he added that he was "not against the Panthers" and, like them, believed that the social aims of aboriginal activists could best be achieved through "revolution, overturning the present society."

"We are part of the Third World movement," he declared. "That's where we belong, that's where our strength will come."

Mr. Coe calls himself a "mission black," because he was born on a mission in rural New South Wales and is only now beginning to learn an aboriginal language.

He said his father was a "drover," an Australian cowboy, who now does casual labor, and that three uncles had been killed in shooting affrays.

Showing a visitor Redfern, a Sydney working-class suburb with a heavy aboriginal population, Mr. Coe pointed out two storefront projects recently established, the Aboriginal Medical Service and the Aboriginal Legal Service, where aborigines can get free help from qualified white volunteers at any hour.

Mr. Coe's group, with the help of some sympathetic whites as Mr. Noffs, the Methodist pastor of the Wayside Chapel, is starting a program of free breakfasts and kindergartens for aboriginal children.

"We urge young blacks to study and go to the university," said Mr. Coe, who is studying law under a Government scholarship program for aboriginal students. "Knowledge is power, a form of black power."