

# Australian Aborigines Set Up 'Embassy,' Score Diplomatic Coup

By ROBERT TRUMBULL Special to The New York Times

New York Times (1857-Current file); Mar 8, 1972; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times

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CANBERRA, Australia — Alarm rippled through conservative political circles in Australia when a spokesman for the self-styled "Aboriginal Embassy," a tent camp of young Aborigines on the broad lawn in front of the Parliament building here, announced recently that the Peking Government had invited 20 Aboriginal activists on a 32-day tour of mainland China as official guests, expenses paid.

The invitation, whose genuineness has been vouched for by such specialists on China as Dr. Stephen Fitzgerald of Australian National University here, is only one of several indications that the tent project set up last month in protest against the Government's latest rejection of land claims by Aborigines is a factor in the politics of this capital city.

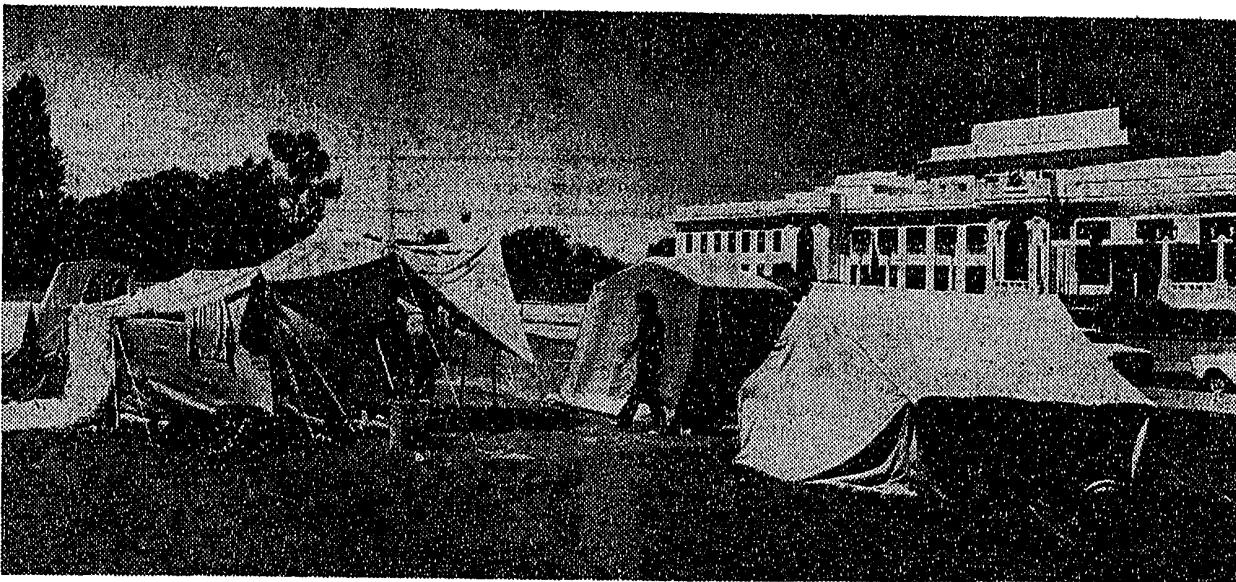
Gough Whitlam, the Leader of the Opposition, and other members of the Labor party in Parliament have visited the tents in recent days. Mr. Whitlam promised that a Labor Government, which he presumably would head, would give Aborigines freehold titles to land instead of the 50-year leases that Prime Minister William McMahon offered in a policy statement on Aboriginal affairs last month.

### Diplomats Visit Camp

Aboriginal leaders and their white supporters interpreted the leasehold program as a new denial of long-standing claims by the Aborigines that they are the rightful owners of the lands that they had occupied for many centuries before Capt. James Cook explored the east coast of Australia and claimed it for Britain in 1770.

Other callers at the tent encampment have included diplomats from several foreign countries. Letters of support have come from civil rights organizations "all over the world" and an Australian waterfront union has donated about \$12,000 to support the enterprise, a spokesman said.

Meanwhile, the relaxed ways of the people in the seven blue, orange and white tents in front of the imposing Parliament building have been a piquant addition to the social life of this quiet inland city.



A view of the tented "Aboriginal Embassy" set up outside the headquarters of Australia's Parliament in Canberra. The New York Times/Robert Trumbull

The "Aboriginal Embassy," though controversial, enjoys friendly relations with the local authorities and with the ordinary people of Canberra, a city of about 120,000 Government servants, diplomats and the people who serve the needs of the official community.

### 'Garden Party' Is Held

About 300 Canberra residents were present when the young Aboriginal activists, joyfully aping the social customs of real embassies, gave a "garden party" on a recent Sunday afternoon. Guests, invited to bring their own refreshments "and some for us," obliged with hampers of food and beverages.

Meals are either cooked at the tents on makeshift stoves or bought at a snack bar a few steps away. The tent occupants, numbering about 10 on weekdays but up to 50 or more on weekends, use nearby public lavatories.

They felt that they had achieved a place in the Canberra community, a spokesman said, when mailmen began routinely delivering mail with the address, "The Lawn, Parliament House."

More importantly, from the viewpoint of civil rights advocates here, the tent dwellers represent a new element in the national political life.

Young aboriginal militants, produced by the gradual spread

of education among the Australian black community of about 140,000, some of whom are still primitive desert nomads, have lifted the long-standing grievances of their race off the back burner of Australian politics.

Like American Indians, the brown-skinned Aborigines have been victims of massacre, oppression and neglect.

According to Government statistics, the Aborigines are at the bottom in education and economic achievement, but lead in infant mortality with a rate six times the national average.

### First Violence Occurs

Only in recent months, however, has the movement among Aborigines for social advancement developed an aura of black-power radicalism, with hints of violence to come.

"People have generally found that they have had to go into the streets for what they want," John Newfong, a 28-year-old Aboriginal journalist and spokesman for the "Aboriginal Embassy," said recently. "My own feeling," he said, "is that if you blow up the right bridges and right railway lines at the right time, you don't have to kill people."

Minor violence attributed to black-power groups has occurred in several major Australian cities this year for the first time.