

FEDERAL COUNCIL FOR ABORIGINAL ADVANCEMENT.

(Copy of press release re objections to Pechiney Lease claims.)

The F.C.A.A. has taken legal action on behalf of Aboriginal residents of Yirrkala, Gove Peninsula to oppose the French, Pechiney Aluminium Company's application for lease land at Point Dundas on Melville Bay, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

Mr. R. C. Ward, barrister of Darwin, will appear on behalf of the Federal Council at the hearing in the Mine Warden's Court on August 16th.

Objections to the application for the lease have been lodged as follows:

1. Neither the Northern Territory Administration nor the Mine Warden Court has the authority to deal with the application.
2. The Mining Ordinance and Regulations have not been complied with.
3. The land applied for is not Crown land.
4. The land belongs to the resident Aboriginal people.
5. The application is not just or equitable.
6. The granting of the lease is contrary to public policy.
7. The land is a part of an Aboriginal Reserve.

The Federal Council executive decided on this action following the recent visit to Yirrkala district by Mr. Gordon Bryant, M.P., vice president of the Council. Mr. Bryant's enquiries revealed that the Aboriginal residents had been in no way consulted. Since returning to Melbourne he has received letters from the elders of the people requesting help to "get back our country of Yirrkala and Melville Bay".

The executive felt compelled to take legal action to protect the rights of the residents as the Northern Territory Administration, whose statutory responsibility it is to protect the people, had neither consulted nor advised them concerning the alienation of their land.

A community of 500 persons has been compressed into an area of one square mile as a result of Government negotiations with Pechiney Company.

Issued by : Stan Davey. General Secretary.

Following are copies of letters received by Mr. Bryant from Yirrkala people, dated July 23rd, 1963.

Dear Mr. Bryant,

We want you Mr. Bryant to help us get back our country of Yirrkala and Melville Bay. You can act for us for land title.

Yours faithfully,
Djalalingba.

Dear Mr. Bryant,

We undersigned people of the tribes living in the Yirrkala district ask you to help us to keep hunting land and food gathering land which we believe we will lose when land which is our place of living is handed to companies for mining. We are hurt that the Government told us nothing of this before it took place. We donot believe that your Government would treat white people this way. We believe our occupancy of this land was lawful. We believe that our old age occupancy of this land gives us rights which should not be brushed aside. We are afraid of the fate of the Larrakeah people a few years ago, will be our fate in a few years if we lose our rights here.

We ask for your action to help us.

Yours sincerely,

Signed: Djalalingba Dhuygala Wularbuma Daybalipu Baiyin
Wawuygarra Diayila Manunu Nyabalinga Lundywuy
Larrakan Milippkum.

(The latter letter was written first in the native Matha language.)

Refer to 1963 "Action Programme" for steps which may be taken by each affiliate. (see page 7.)