

SYDNEY SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 15/12/68

Writs halt huge Gove scheme

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DARWIN, Sat.—An Aboriginal legal challenge to the \$300 million Gove bauxite alumina project will halt work on the scheme, experts believe.

Mining and pastoral interests believe the challenge will also affect investment prospects in North Australia.

In Darwin today Aboriginal civil rights leader Mr. Phillip Roberts, a medical assistant with the health department, came out squarely behind the Gove tribe's action against the Commonwealth Government and the Nabalco Mining Company, the company behind the Gove scheme.

Jeopardy

In doing so the 44-year-old father of eight daughters believes he is placing in jeopardy his application for a \$5500-a-year job with the Aboriginal Affairs Department in Canberra.

The speculation follows the issuing of writs yesterday by three tribalised Aborigines for unspecified damages and seeking a restraining order and a Supreme Court order confirming Aboriginal land rights on areas of the Arnhem Land Reserve.

The hearing is unlikely to take place before early next year.

The land is known to be the richest bauxite deposit in the world and a huge international consortium with 70 percent

foreign capital is starting the development program.

Plans have been drawn up for what will be Australia's most modern township on the north-east tip of Arnhem Land.

The Methodist Overseas Mission, which has for years run Yirrkala Mission at Gove, is behind the Aborigines' move.

In Melbourne yesterday, the Rev. A. F. Ellemor launched an Australia-wide appeal for funds to meet the legal costs of the action.

Like all missions in the Territory, MOM is heavily subsidised in all its operations here.

Prime Minister Gorton announced last week that when the Gove project is operating fully, the Northern Territory Aborigines Mineral Royalties Trust Fund will benefit by almost \$1 million a year.

About \$250,000 in royalties is now paid into the trust fund by Broken Hill Proprietary Limited from its manganese operations at Grootte Eylandt, not far from Gove.

Mr. Roberts said the Gove people were very proud and determined.

In pre-war years they had killed many invading

Japanese fishermen for interfering with their women.

"They are fighters, and now they are fighting the white man way in court,"

Mr. Roberts said.