



"What are your views on the national anthem?"

# The black cauldron boils over

By PAUL HEINRICHS and RON HOLDSWORTH

ABORIGINAL militancy in Australia is a boomerang which a student Aborigine named Charles Perkins probably launched — perhaps unwittingly — in 1965 with the Freedom Riders in New South Wales.

Yesterday after gathering impetus during a nine-year flight, the boomerang returned.

Ironically enough, the same controversial Charles Perkins was there in Canberra yesterday doing his best to keep things peaceful. But — for a few hours — it seemed the boomerang was out of control.

The trouble yesterday can be viewed as the culmination of militancy among Aborigines which has evolved over the past nine years.

It started with the Freedom Ride in February, 1965, when Charles Perkins led a bus load of white students through northern NSW towns.

The group staged demonstrations wherever they ran into racial segregation — at hotels, restaurants, swimming pools, theatres — in country towns like Walgett, Moree and Kempsey.

The Freedom Riders were abused and ran into barrages of bottles, stones and eggs.

But when some conservative Aboriginal leaders charged that he was upsetting peaceful relationships between whites and Aborigines in country towns, Perkins replied that that was what they had set out to do.

This was followed in 1966 by a series of strikes by Aboriginal stockmen in the Northern Territory for equal pay. One strike on the Vestey's Wave Hill station lasted a year.

In the next year white Australia's apparent sympathy for Aborigines led to a nine-to-one vote at a referendum to include Aborigines in the census.

But within months Aborigines all over Australia were protesting about the gaoling of prominent Aboriginal spokesman Dexter Daniels on vagrancy charges in the Northern Territory.

By 1968, Black Power was fully fledged in the United States,

500 square miles as tribal lands. In Sydney, 70 people were arrested — including Aborigines — at a wild demonstration to support the Wave Hill squatters.

Demonstrations continued through 1971. There was also a threatened assassination of Aboriginal Senator Bonner, the Federal Director of Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. B. Dexter) and the Queensland Director of Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. P. J. Killoran).

Black Power entered Canberra in January, 1972, with the establishment of the Aboriginal tent embassy on the lawns outside Parliament House. One of the Black Power leaders, Dennis Walker, warned that blacks were ready to use guns or any force available to back Aboriginal land rights claims.

The tent embassy was tolerated only until July 20, when 60 Commonwealth police ripped the tents down. In the melee, nine people were injured and eight arrested.

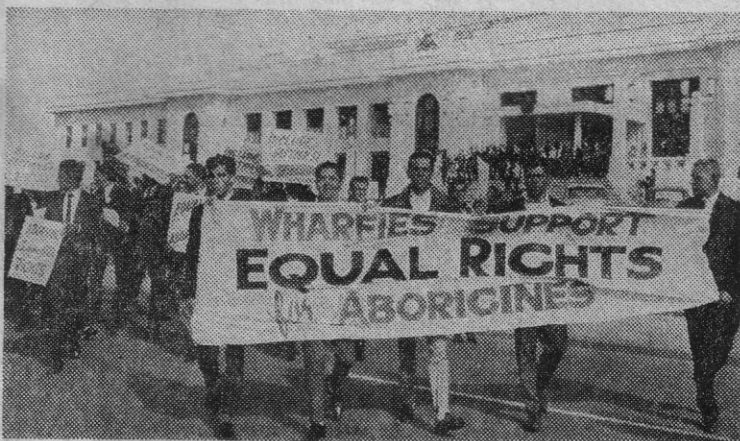
It was re-erected, and torn down by police another three times before the Federal elections. There were more brawls, injuries and arrests, and at one stage four Aboriginal women chained themselves to the rails of Parliament House.

The protests quietened with the election of the Labor Government and the ensuing promises of major reform under the first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Bryant.

But Charles Perkins was despondent even last June. He said then: "I don't see the Australian public or the Government having the capacity or the courage to take steps to bring about the changes needed by Aborigines."

Then trouble began again last October when Mr. Bryant was replaced. Demonstrators gathered on the Parliament House steps, re-erected the tent embassy and jeered the Queen and Prince Philip.

The Queen was jeered again yesterday by demonstrators supporting Charles Perkins, the first person to warn of the violent potential of Black Power.



August, 1965 . . . a protest in Canberra.

and Charles Perkins was predicting that violence could come to Australia as the Black Power movement developed here.

"I couldn't imagine myself running down the street waving a .303 and saying 'I'm gonna kill whites'. I couldn't imagine it . . . but it is possible," he told a Melbourne University luncheon meeting.

Soon after, the demonstrations in support of Aboriginal land rights began with a 24-hour vigil in June. Most demonstrators were white.

By 1969 the young black militants were emerging in Aborigines' representative bodies. In

Victoria, the militants invited Caribbean Black Power leader Roosevelt Brown as their guest speaker.

This move split the Aboriginal Advancement League, with the militants taking over. The Federal Government withheld its \$40,000 grant to the league as a result.

In 1970, four Aboriginal representatives went to an international Black Power congress in the United States. During the same year the potential for violence in Australia was stepped up.

The Gurindji tribe squatted on the Wave Hill station and claimed