

"MARCH ON DARWIN"

Police Disperse Armed Aboriginal Strikers

DARWIN, Wednesday.—Police at midday today dispersed a group of 32 aboriginal strikers armed with iron rods, pointed sticks and exhaust pipes, who were, in their own words, "marching on Darwin."

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They arrested a strike leader, an aborigine named Lawrence, and a striking police tracker, named Bill Palata, neither of whom resisted.

Ten police, led by Sergeant Mutch, dispersed the aborigines outside Darwin while reporters were interviewing the strikers. The aborigines looked on quietly as the two men were arrested and appeared bewildered because the police acted so swiftly.

Police told them to drop their weapons and walk back to Berrimah aboriginal reserve, about six miles away.

The aborigines went quietly.

The N.T. Director of Native Affairs (Mr. F. H. Moy) watched proceedings.

Assorted Weapons

Police later located all the weapons in the grass. They included crank handles attached to long ropes, iron rods, with leather handles on them, pointed sticks, exhaust pipes, steel rods and iron bars.

Before they re-entered the Berrimah reserve later today, the aborigines said that they had decided to stay on strike until Lawrence and Bill Palata were released.

The police later charged Lawrence, under the Observance of Law Ordinance (1921), with interfering with the right of a person to carry on his lawful occupation and Bill Palata with disturbing the police in the execution of their duty.

Lawrence and Palata will appear in Darwin police court tomorrow and the Native Af-

fairs branch will arrange for their defence.

Police refused a request by the acting secretary of the North Australian Workers' Union (Mr. T. Peel) to bail out Lawrence and Bill Palata, because aborigines can only be bailed out to the Native Affairs branch or to their employers.

Mr. Peel said: "It is obvious that the arrest of the two aboriginal strike leaders is a deliberate attempt to cut off the leadership of the strike

and intimidate these people, who are standing up for their rights both as workers and human beings."

He added that, although the strike was organised by the aborigines themselves, the union would do everything in its power to obtain award rates and conditions and full citizenship rights for aboriginal workers.

Before his arrest Lawrence said that the aborigines were marching on Darwin to interview Mr. Moy and then visit the office of the North Australian Workers' Union.

Today was the third day of the aborigines' strike, and there is no sign of a settlement. It is the longest strike the aborigines have had in the N.T.

They will not be allotted their usual picture bus to-night, and the strikers are going without their midday meal.

The strike has not seriously affected normal life in Darwin.

Many housewives have to do their own washing, ironing and house cleaning, while some not very important municipal work is being left undone.