

# GURINDJI STRUGGLE THREATENED BY BUREAUCRACY

**DARWIN:** White bureaucrats and racists are trying to negate the long struggle of the Gurindji people for self-determination and dignity.

The Gurindji people at Wattie Creek, although in occupation of their land, have been forbidden to muster unbranded "cleanskin" cattle. Vestey's, owners of Wave Hill station which the Gurindji left nearly ten years ago, are mustering the cleanskins.

excuse. Once they joined the council, the problems disappeared.

A major factor in weakening Gurindji resistance, besides the delay in providing money, was the presence of a large number of Baptist Church members at Wave Hill. The schoolteachers, storekeeper, mechanic and CONAIR agent at Wave Hill are all Baptists.

Rev. Graham Paulson has been Baptist Minister at Wave Hill since 1970. He lives in one of the best houses on the settlement, complete with swimming pool. The Baptists have managed to infiltrate the whole settlement through him. As a fundamentalist sect, they are opposed to the Gurindji's traditional culture. Although the schools are under the NT (Federal) Education Department, Gurindji children are given religious indoctrination and sing Baptist hymns.

The Department is planning a tourist complex at Wave Hill, with a motel/hotel, service station and supermarket. Nine houses are being built at Wave Hill - but all are for white Department administrators.

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Cavanagh and Department boss Barrie Dexter visited Wattie Creek last year, and gave the Gurindji the clear impression they would receive government aid and be allowed to muster the cleanskins. Now it seems the Gurindji are to be once more brought under the thumb of the white bureaucrats.

The Whitlam Government's failure to live up to its clear 1972 election policy in relation to the Gurindji once more highlights the inability of reformism to resolve the needs of the Black population.

Now the Gurindji people have been forced to enter into the Libangu Council - a local government body covering Wattie Creek, Wave Hill and the Wailbri people. After waiting months for promised Federal Government aid the Gurindjis were told they would get no aid unless they joined the Council.

The council's municipal officer is Allan Thorpe, who went to Wattie Creek in 1971 as a jack-of-all-trades paid by ABSCHOL (the student Aboriginal aid group) to help the Gurindji in their struggle for land and self-determination.

He was sacked by the Gurindji and got a job at Wave Hill. As municipal officer, he now has control over them once more. It was Thorpe who told the Gurindji they would get no more aid until they joined the Council.

Soon after the Gurindji joined the council, repair and other jobs at Wattie Creek were carried out. For many months, the Gurindjis had tried to get tradesmen employed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs at Wave Hill to do these jobs - but there was always an