

Natives militant stand condemned

THE National Tribal Council yesterday drew a condemnation over its strong, new militant stand on aboriginal land rights.

The Queensland Premier (Mr. Bjelke - Petersen) warned that militant tactics would have no influence on the Government's handling of aboriginal affairs.

The council's move also was criticised as "disgusting", by the president of the One People of Australia League (Mr. N. T. Bonner).

The council's full conference voted in Brisbane on Saturday to support "direct action" if needed to support native land rights.

The national secretary of the council (Mr. Dennis Walker) said the support would extend to use of violence in a "justified case."

Prevention

Meanwhile the council yesterday apparently strove to modify its militant line and the national executive under the new chairmanship of Mr. Bruce McGuiness, of Melbourne, met behind closed doors.

In a move to prevent further radical comments, the council created a publicity

officer post to handle all inquiries.

The officer, Mrs. Naomi Mayers, of Melbourne, will be responsible to the executive for policy statements.

Mr. Bjelke-Petersen said he believed the council had not fully realised the implications of its "direct action" support move.

"These tactics are no way to influence any Government," he said.

"My Government has always sought to do the right and best thing for the aboriginals."

Notoriety

Commenting on the possibility of "sit-ins" by the council members in the State Parliament, the Premier said: "I am sure the Speaker of the House would not tolerate any interruption or interference with the procedure of the House."

Mr. Bonner condemned the council's strong-line, saying it was led by people seeking notoriety.

"I think it's disgusting. I most strongly condemn anyone resorting to vio-

lence to settle anything," he said.

"Militarism will only alienate aboriginals from those people genuinely concerned about land rights and social and economic justice."

Mr. Bonner said he had been aware that a militant feeling had been growing among young aboriginals in the last three years.

"I view this matter seriously and I'm perturbed about it."

"These people are only a cheap imitation of groups in other countries — like the Black Panthers," he said.

He was adamant that the League would not join the council's demands for the abolition of the Aboriginal and Island Affairs Act.

"I believe there are certain parts of the Act that must be reviewed but generally it is a good thing and must be retained for some time yet," Mr. Bonner said.

A press statement "to make the N.T.C.'s position quite clear" was released by Mrs. Mayers after the council's closed executive session.

It said: "The council asserts the moral force and justice of its fight for rights, equality, and justice for all aboriginals and islanders to defend themselves against violence and injustice."

White society

"We do not see that aboriginals and islanders should be expected to be more non-violent than the white society in this country, which was founded on violence and continues to use violence in its own so-called interests."

The statement concluded: "Let those who tell aboriginals and islanders to be non-violent practise it themselves and preach it to the white community."

Asked to elaborate on the council's "direct action" policy, Mrs. Mayers said: "We don't know what this will mean yet — we don't know what opposition we'll meet."

She would not rule out the use of force saying: "We will have to decide these matters when the time comes. At present we're steering a middle course."