

KOORIES TOLD TO GET OUT BUT ONUS SAYS 'WE'RE STAYING'

Aboriginal Land rights claim leader, Lin Onus was told to quit Sherebrooke Forest by midnight April 5. but he is still there.

The next move is up to the Forests Commission who will need a Court Order to start prosecutions to get out.

The notice to quit was delivered to Mr. Onus at the camp on Monday, March 29 by forest commission officers.

Earlier that day the Chief Forest Officer for this area, Mr. Jim Westcott and visited the camp with a photographer from the Forests Commission.

When the notices were delivered, copies were handed to Mr. Onus and his wife, Rosemary, and others were nailed to trees and the toilet.

If Mr. Onus does not quit the forest he may be subject to a fine of \$40 for the first offence, \$100 if he's not out after a fortnight and a further \$200 for every fortnight after that.

Mr. Onus said last night that he will not quit the forest and he hasn't got the money to pay the fines.

If the Forests Commission sticks to the letter of the law they could move straight into the camp and remove all buildings and improvements, but according to a Forests Commission spokesman this seems unlikely to happen.

Mr. Onus was recently given further incentive to quit the forest.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. R. Meagher, offered Mr. Onus a house for him and his family, which has been rejected.

In a letter from the Director of Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. M. R. Worthy, the offer was re-affirmed.

"Dear Mr. Onus, In view of the circumstances surrounding our discussions within the last day or two, I wish to confirm the offer by the Minister with regard to accommodation for you and your family.

"As you are in some difficulty to obtain suitable accommodation and

forest, the Minister indicated that he was prepared to make a house available for you to rent in the Dandenong area.

"However, in view of your verbal advice today that you wish to decline this offer, as this would not help you particularly to obtain the factory premises which you are seeking in Belgrave, the Minister has regretfully accepted your rejection of his offer.

"Should you decide to reconsider this matter please let me know as early as possible. Yours sincerely, M. R. Worthy, Director of Aboriginal Affairs."

Since this letter was received Mr. Onus has reconsidered the matter but has once again rejected the offer.

He claims that after he and his wife inspected and settled on a house, the

Ministry started talking in terms of him buying the house using a \$1500 grant from the State Government as a deposit.

This is normal procedure for the Ministry, one of whose functions is to assist aborigines to obtain housing.

The factory proposal mentioned in Mr. Worthy's letter refers to Mr. Onus' desire to start a souvenir factory in Belgrave.

He applied for a loan from the Commonwealth Government in January, 1970, to establish this factory, but his request was denied.

On Monday Mr. Onus and several other koories will be travelling to Canberra to discuss the factory proposal and other related issues.

Mr. Onus told Free Press that he would be back in the forest in time for any confrontation with the Forests Commission.

