

Eight arrested as police tear 'embassy' down

THE SIX-MONTH-old Aboriginal embassy outside Parliament House, Canberra, was torn down yesterday morning by A.C.T. police. In 10 minutes of violence between more than 60 police and embassy supporters eight people were arrested, one Aboriginal was carried away unconscious, and six policemen were injured.

At one stage when the last embassy tent had collapsed, the Federal Labor MP for the A.C.T., Mr K. Enderby, called through a megaphone: "I am speaking to the police. There is no tent here now. You are exceeding your authority."

Several demonstrators were knocked to the ground and clothes were ripped as bitter fights broke out when police attempted to move them.

Afterwards accusations of police violence were made by an Aboriginal leader, Mrs Faith Bandler, and a Labor MP, Mr G. Bryant.

During the incident the Prime Minister's wife, Mrs Sonia McMahon, arrived in her official car and went into Parliament House.

Police went to the tent area yesterday morning 50 minutes after the gazettal of the amended Trespass on Commonwealth Lands Ordinance which empowered them to remove the embassy.

They removed all the outer tents and placed belongings on a big trailer.

At this stage students from the Australian National University and Aboriginal supporters arrived at the site and formed a human chain around the last remaining tent, the embassy headquarters.

Inspector Osborne from the A.C.T. police warned the demonstrators that if they refused to disband they would be arrested for obstruction. He was drowned out by chants of "land rights now."

The police then plunged into the demonstrators and a series of violent scuffles erupted as students were thrown, pulled and carried from the area.

Eight people were arrested, including Aboriginal leader Miss Bobbi Sykes and four other Aboriginals. One Aboriginal was later taken to hospital.

'NO REASON'

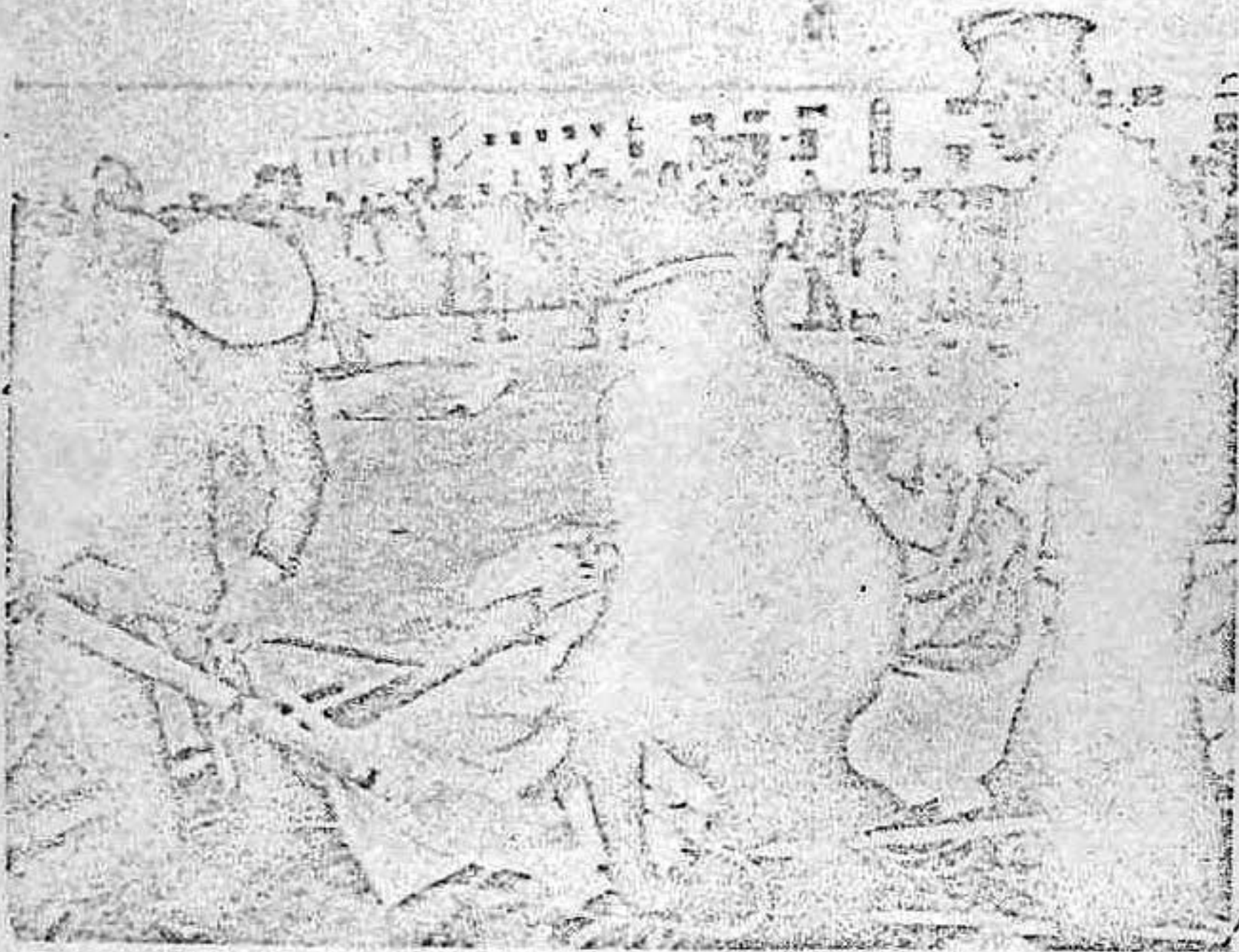
Mr Enderby, who had earlier described the police job as a "pretty dirty duty," warned police towards the end of the incident they were exceeding their authority.

The Federal Opposition Leader, Mr Whitlam, last night attacked the removal of the embassy as a high-handed and needless action.

"Notices of motion and questions raised last session made it plain that Parliament wished to scrutinise very closely any ordinance designed to remove the embassy," he said.

The Minister for the Interior, Mr Hunt, had told Parliament on May 11 that adequate public notice would be given of the date of operation of the ordinance.

End of a protest symbol



A.C.T. police dismantle a tent of the Aboriginal "embassy."

The Senate Opposition Leader, Senator Murphy, said the Labor Party would move for the disallowance of the ordinance when Parliament resumed.

Mr Hunt said the disruption was due to the outside demonstrators who were "hell bent" on violence. Six policemen were injured, a few of them seriously, he said.

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