

In the field of land rights, the Government has frozen the granting of all new mineral leases on reserve lands.

►A NEW RECORD:

Aborigines have been mentioned in the latest edition of the *Guinness Book of Records*, an international publication listing world records of all sorts. Under the heading "Human Achievement—Endurance and Endeavour", it is recorded that the poorest people in the world are the Pintibu Aborigines whose entire collective wealth is valued at less than \$10.

►MORE HOMES AT MOREE:

The Department of Child Welfare is to acquire seventeen houses for Aborigines at Moree. Some of the houses are to be constructed by the Housing Commission and the remainder will be purchased. All will be available for Aboriginal people of the Moree area.

►WOODBURN'S DISTINCTION:

Mr Joe Crofts, according to the people of Woodburn, is the first Aboriginal person to acquire the managership of a newsagency. For Mr Crofts managing a newsagency is a far cry from the 5-year-old boy whose mother placed him in a home at Alice Springs because she could not care for him. He was later educated at Charters Towers where he became school captain. Only a year ago he finally located his mother's whereabouts, in Darwin. He served in the army and for a short time studied engineering at university. He then set out to see Australia, working in cane cutting and farm labouring. He later took up surveying and met his wife while working on the Snowy Mountains project. After a period living in Western Australia the family returned to New South Wales. Eventually Mr Crofts decided that for the sake of his three children's schooling he should settle down. It was then that Mr Crofts combined his own savings with a loan from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs in order to purchase the newsagency. Despite its stringent standards Mr Crofts got the go-ahead from the Newsagency Transfer Committee. In the 12 months since moving to Woodburn Mr Crofts has found the people friendly and loyal. Mr Crofts and his wife work long hours at the shop—she assists 3 days a week—but feel their efforts are worthwhile. Already they have painted the interior, and installed a new sign, which advertises the Aboriginal artifacts Mr Crofts sells.

►YIRAWALA:

According to Sandra Holmes, who has just published her book *Yirawala, Artist and Man*, Australia's greatest traditional Aboriginal artist may never paint again. With the onset of age, bad health, and advancing blindness, he has not painted for over a year, virtually since the time he was awarded the M.B.E. for his achievement. He is famous for his bark paintings depicting the laws, legends, and spiritual beliefs of the Western Arnhem Land Aboriginal culture. Yirawala is 80 years old.

►GRANTS FOR ABORIGINAL ART:

The Commonwealth Government has recently made two grants to foster Aboriginal culture. The Prime Minister, Mr Whitlam, announced the grants in December. The Aboriginal Publications Foundation, sponsors of the magazine *Identity*, will be given \$16,000 to help its operations. The Craft Council of Australia will receive \$5,000 to prepare an exhibition.

►COMMONWEALTH LAND RIGHTS MOVES:

As the first step towards Commonwealth recognition of land rights the Federal Government has appointed Mr Justice Woodward to inquire into how land rights should be granted. Mr Justice Woodward acted as counsel for the Yirrkala in the Gove land rights case of 1970. At that time Mr Justice Blackburn rejected Woodward's claims on behalf of the Yirrkala. The Commonwealth Government has already decided in principle to grant land rights. Mr Justice Woodward's role will be to advise how this should be done. He will report on: Arrangements necessary in the Northern Territory for vesting title to Aboriginal reserve land, including rights in mineral and timber, in the Aboriginal groups and communities concerned; procedures for the examination of claims based on traditional rights in the areas outside reserves or alternative ways of meeting effectively the needs of Aboriginal communities outside the reserves for land; and amendments to legislation necessary to give effect to his recommendations. In announcing Mr Justice Woodward's appointment the Prime Minister said: "The settlement and development of Australia has been achieved at the expense of long-established rights of Aboriginal clans and other groups to title in the land with which they and their ancestors have been traditionally associated." Once Mr Justice Woodward has completed his present inquiry the Prime Minister intends to refer subsequent matters involving Aboriginal rights or claims to land to him.