

Queensland, showing Aboriginal reserves and (right) WCIP delegates with Aborigines outside Parliament House, Canberra, April 30.

were all at one with the Aboriginal people on land rights, joining them in a march to Parliament House and a demonstration on April 30. One of the Aboriginal delegates, Margaret Mallard, an NAC representative from Western Australia, warned the world's indigenous peoples that they faced "the final chapter of destruction", unless they got together to seek justice in domestic and international courts. World powers and transnational companies were about to expropriate their last homelands. She called on the Australian Government to use its power to establish land rights in Queensland.

Because only the three official NAC delegates could speak at the WCIP assembly, according to its constitution, the NAC and the Murrumbidgee Aboriginal association in Canberra arranged a separate Aboriginal forum, which met at another site within the university. It was able to pass on its resolutions to the assembly. Before it opened, Kevin Gilbert, the Aboriginal writer, cabled the WCIP in Canada asking it to accredit two additional delegates who were not members of the NAC, claiming that it was "formulated by and acts under the auspices of the Australian Government".

He also issued a statement which said that the NAC was "not representative of the indigenous view". He quoted the NAC's own bulletin: "The Government does not want to recognise that there is a separate Aboriginal nation within Australia. This is why the Government is frightened of the word treaty and prefers the use of a more ambiguous word such as makarrata. It appears that the Government believes it will be able to negotiate an agreement with the NAC in which the Aboriginal people give up their



claim to being a separate nation, a sovereign race of people". On April 23 the NAC chairman, Mr Bill Bird, denied that the NAC acted under the auspices of the Government. He claimed that it had the sole mandate from Aboriginal people to represent them at national and international levels.

Naturally, the ATC makes no comment on this issue, which is one for Aboriginal Australians to determine. We mention it here simply because the issue does exist and is relevant to the treaty or makarrata concept. In fact, the NAC made known to the WCIP its thinking on the makarrata in a very important 12-page position paper. Also, in a section of its preliminary National Issues report to the WCIP in Canada, the NAC said it had asked for the negotiation of "a treaty

known as a makarrata", which would be "based on the prior ownership of Australia by the Aboriginal people".

W.C.I.P. Canberra meeting

We covered the background to that meeting in *Aboriginal Treaty News* No 1 (which we omitted to date, for April 1981) and we will mention it only briefly here, for reasons of space. But it will be covered well in the next National Aboriginal Conference *Newsletter*, from PO Box 259, Woden, ACT 2606. The WCIP meeting was poorly reported by the Australian media, although it was very important to Aboriginal people, attracting many as observers, in addition to the three official NAC delegates. The ATC was grateful to be accorded observer status, and we helped both the NAC and two land council representatives with limited financial support. We provided Aboriginal Australians and delegates from overseas with our publications.

Delegates came from 27 countries. They were northern, central and southern American Indian groups, Inuit from north America and Greenland, Sami people from northern Europe, and Maoris. They

Aboriginal Treaty Committee Papers

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