

Aboriginal rights 'broken'

AUSTRALIA'S Federal government is planning to abandon three of the five principles on which nationwide land rights legislation for aboriginals was to be based.

That is the claim by the Copenhagen-based International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), which has reacted angrily to Premier Bob Hawke's plans.

More than 400 aborigines staged a sit-in at the offices of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in May to protest against what is called the "Preferred National Model for Land Rights".

This "model" (which has been suspended as official policy while the government consults aboriginals) offends some of the key planks of the policy that has so far been outlined by Clyde Holding, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. These principles are:

- Aboriginal land to be held under inalienable freehold title.
- Aboriginal control in relation to mining on aboriginal land.
- Protection of sacred sites.
- Access to mining royalty equivalents.
- Compensation for lost land to be negotiated.

Aboriginal protests against the

AROUND THE WORLD



● Bob Hawke

government's plans, which are to be introduced in the next fiscal year, are now obstructed by the decision to disband the National Aboriginal Conference, which represents the interests of the continent's original inhabitants.

The government's "Preferred National Model for Land Rights" breaks the first of the three principles. According to the IWGIA:

"The 'Preferred Model', or anything similar which should replace it, would be disastrous to the future of aboriginal land rights."

The government also wants to amend the Northern Territories Act

(1976), which allows for existing aboriginal reserves to be handed over and held under aboriginal title, and allowed some Crown land to be claimed.

In a strongly-worded letter to the government, the IWGIA declare:

"The Federal Government of Australia is not only backing away from its progressive past intentions, but is actually undermining those very principles which had given the indigenous world some hope."

"In addition, at a time when aboriginal organisations have become united in condemnation of the proposed code for land rights, the Federal Government has disbanded a major voice of protest."

"The effect is to stifle aboriginal opposition and confound its unity at a most opportune moment for the government."

The IWGIA letter adds the barbed comment:

"We very much hope for a time when the Federal Government of Australia will match its clear and upright stance on the human rights of Black peoples in South Africa and the indigenous peoples of Kanaky (New Caledonia) with a similar regard for the just claims of those indigenous peoples living in its own country."

VIETNAM EYES CHINA'S MARKET

VIETNAM Peasant farmers produced 17.2m tons of rice last year, which was barely sufficient for the country's needs.

Vietnam's leaders are still agonising over which ideological direction to take in their bid for economic growth. They are watching closely the free market experiment in neighbouring China.

In China, says Mr. Tran Phuon, an economics minister speaking to John Gittings of *The Guardian* (June 28), the state is now like a landlord, giving up all responsibility to the peasant in return for collecting "rent" in the form of taxation.

Since embarking on this course, agricultural productivity in China has soared.

ZIMBABWE Land was at the centre of the liberation war, but it was not a factor in the recent elections - despite the fact that fewer than expected landless labourers had been settled on their own tracts. Even so, reports David Beresford (The Guardian, June 27): "Whatever the future holds, the land issue will continue to be the touchstone to the fate of Zimbabwe."

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CYPRUS The U.S. offered a £500m (\$645m) aid package to buy peace between Greeks and Turks. Part of the plan is a Central Purchasing Fund, which is designed to resolve the problem of Greek refugees whose homes, land and businesses were abandoned in

areas now occupied by Turks.

The Fund would act as a land bank, buying Greek property in Turkish areas and selling it to Turkish Cypriots, and vice versa.

The Fund's strategy would fit the concept of a federal state. It would help to avoid the danger of the larger Greek population "swamping" the Turkish sector, and would also encourage Turkish refugees to abandon ideas of a mass return to the south.

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NICARAGUA The government has taken over six estates belonging to Enrique Bolanos, president of the Private Enterprise Council, because he refuses to negotiate over the transfer of land to peasants. Landless peasants found their own solution: they occupied the land, near Managua, illegally.