



TRIBUNE

INSIDE  
MP blasts

Handwritten: *Unionists Help Aboriginal Strike*

# Unionists Help Aboriginal Strike

Dexter Daniel and Captain Major the two representatives of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Rights Council

OUR COUNTRY



## MAY DAY 1964- 1971

*And the struggle for  
Aboriginal workers' rights  
and land in the NT*

# 400 Aborigines march in Darwin; make history

## "As fellow workers not as Aborigines"

MY son will remember that history was made in May, 1964, because on Monday, May 4, he marched in the May Day procession in Darwin with over 400 full-blood Aboriginal men, women and children. For the very first time in Australia the original inhabitants of our country, as a united group, embraced the traditional custom of their white fellow-workers. Enthusiastically they accepted the offer of the trade unions to join them and use the May Day march to voice their own protests and present their own demands.



From Bagot Settlement, from walking Berrimah, even over a water by boat from Dellam... they descended in their schools at the assembly point.

business found. Despite... the fact that in the following... the Legislative Council of Northern Territory was to... to debate the Social Welfare Bill, the Aboriginal people... determined to demonstrate... it will that this Bill should... passed as a first step to... tling to them the beginning... equal opportunity.

at even more determined... e they, as their business and... are revealed, to put an end... the use of the disgraceful... Employment Ordinance... best means by which the... lity pastoralists and other... layers in the N.T. were... decisions of the Common... in Arbitration Court and... safely exploit the labour of Aboriginal workers.

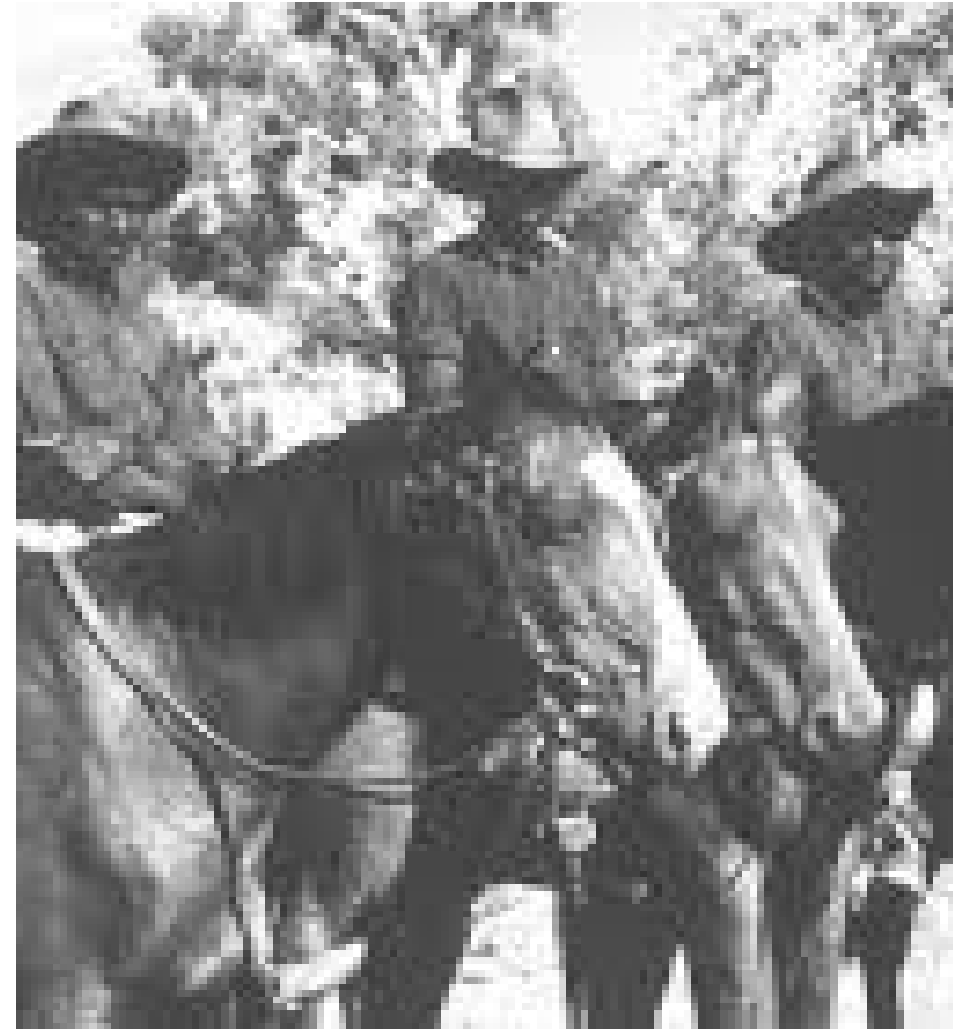


**THE TIME IS NOW**  
Our fellow-workers the Aborigines, like the Negroes in the United States, must get full equality now. ABOVE: Aboriginal people's demands as raised at the head of their record contingent in Darwin's May Day march. LEFT: Some of the women marchers.

MAY DAY  
DARWIN  
1964: 400  
WORKERS

# 1964: EQUAL PAY FOR NT ABORIGINAL STOCKMEN

- Aboriginal Stockmen at this time were earning 1/5 of minimum award wages.
- Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission granted equal wages
- But delayed application of the award until December 1968.
- Davis Daniels: “The justice of this decision can never be explained to Aboriginal people”
- Dexter Daniels: “why don’t you let my people fight?”



# DEXTER DANIELS

- 1964- Organiser for North Australia Workers Union
  - Equal pay for stockmen
  - Newcastle Waters Strike 1966
  - Gurindji/Wave Hill Walk off 1966
  - First Aboriginal Executive of the Darwin Branch of the ALP 1968
  - Roper River Mission Strike 1970



# Aborigines' strike

66  
Dexter Daniel and Captain Major the two representatives of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Rights Council on a speaking tour in the Eastern States found willing and enthusiastic support from workers on building jobs in Sydney.

They spoke to a packed lunch hour meeting on the Australia Square project, telling in a simple sincere straightforward way the story of the lives of the Aboriginal stockmen and their families on the cattle stations in the Northern Territory.

Meat week  
lling  
tern  
here

ing  
lan  
cil

al  
t-  
or  
it

They told of the shockingly inhuman conditions under which they were compelled to exist, huts like dog kennels, and scandalously low pay, \$6.00 to \$10.00 per week.

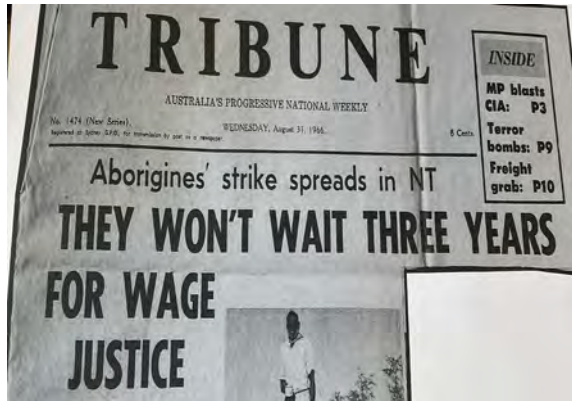
Waters Cattle Stations had walked out demanding that they be paid equal rates immediately.

The Arbitration Court had fixed an award which provided improved wages but had fixed the operation of the award for December, 1968.

After hearing the two speaker workers on the Australia Square project decided to put in a weekly voluntary payment of \$1.00 per head.

At Boral Oil Job, Matraville it was decided to take up collections each week.

Fed up with these intolerable conditions the Aboriginal stockmen at Wave Hill and Newcastle



## 1966: NEWCASTLE WATERS STATION

- “Aborigines made Trade Union history last Friday when they walked off Newcastle Waters Station”

May 1<sup>st</sup> 1966

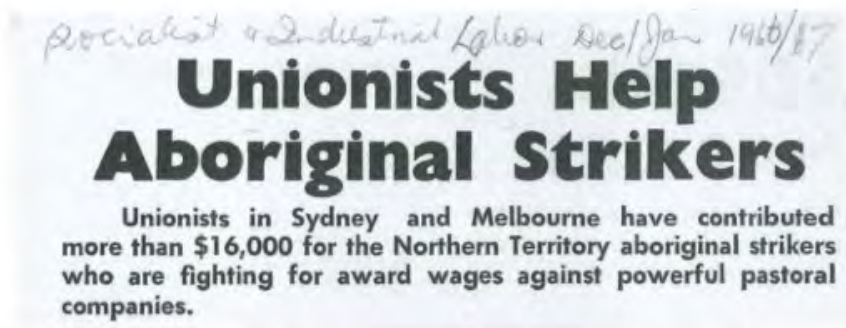
Special Election Poster — Page 8

# 1966 PROTEST OUTSIDE NT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



“The leader of the demonstration, Mr. Dexter Daniels president of the Aboriginal rights council handed Mr. Chan a pamphlet setting out the demands of the Aborigines in the Territory”

- Full Pay for Aboriginal Stockmen
- Direct payment of social services to Aborigines
- Full ownership of reserves for Aborigines. (August 16<sup>th</sup> 1966)



The solidarity of the stockmen has amazed the big pastoralists and the Commonwealth Government, and there is every indication that provided the trade union movement stands behind the striking stockmen they can win justice for their claims  
(Socialist and Industrial Labour Dec/Jan 1966/7)

## UNION RESPONSE

- “Unionists everywhere must rally behind the North Australian Workers Union and other persons seeking justice for the Aborigines of the Northern Territory”
- Equal Pay for Equal work!

SYDNEY FUND  
RAISING  
TOUR  
(ACTOR'S  
EQUITY)



- “I am just like you. I feel the same and I want to live the same. I am going to fight for the rights and equality of my people so that they can live the same and I am going to do it with people like Captain Major, people of my own colour, but we need the help of people like you” (19/10 1966)



# Support For Aboriginal Stockmen

Lunch-hour and smoko meetings of Sydney watersiders on October 18 gave a rousing reception to Captain Major, Aboriginal head stockman at Newcastle Waters (NT) cattle station and Dexter Daniel, President of the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights.

Strikers' Case



PASSING ROUND THE HAT

## 1966-SPEAKING TOURS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR STRIKING STOCKMEN

October 1966- speaking tour of southern capitals by Dexter Daniels and Captain Major (Newcastle Waters Station)

Spoke to Newcastle Trades Hall on October 26th

“We have got a problem, a hard problem. We have a fight on our hands, and we need the support of the southern Trades Unions”

Trip sponsored by: Actor's Equity, Building Workers Industrial Union, Teachers Federation and the society for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

# WAVE HILL WALK-OFF 1966

Wave Hill owned by Vestey's, the 2<sup>nd</sup> wealthiest family in Britain since 1914.

Traditional land of the Gurundji people.

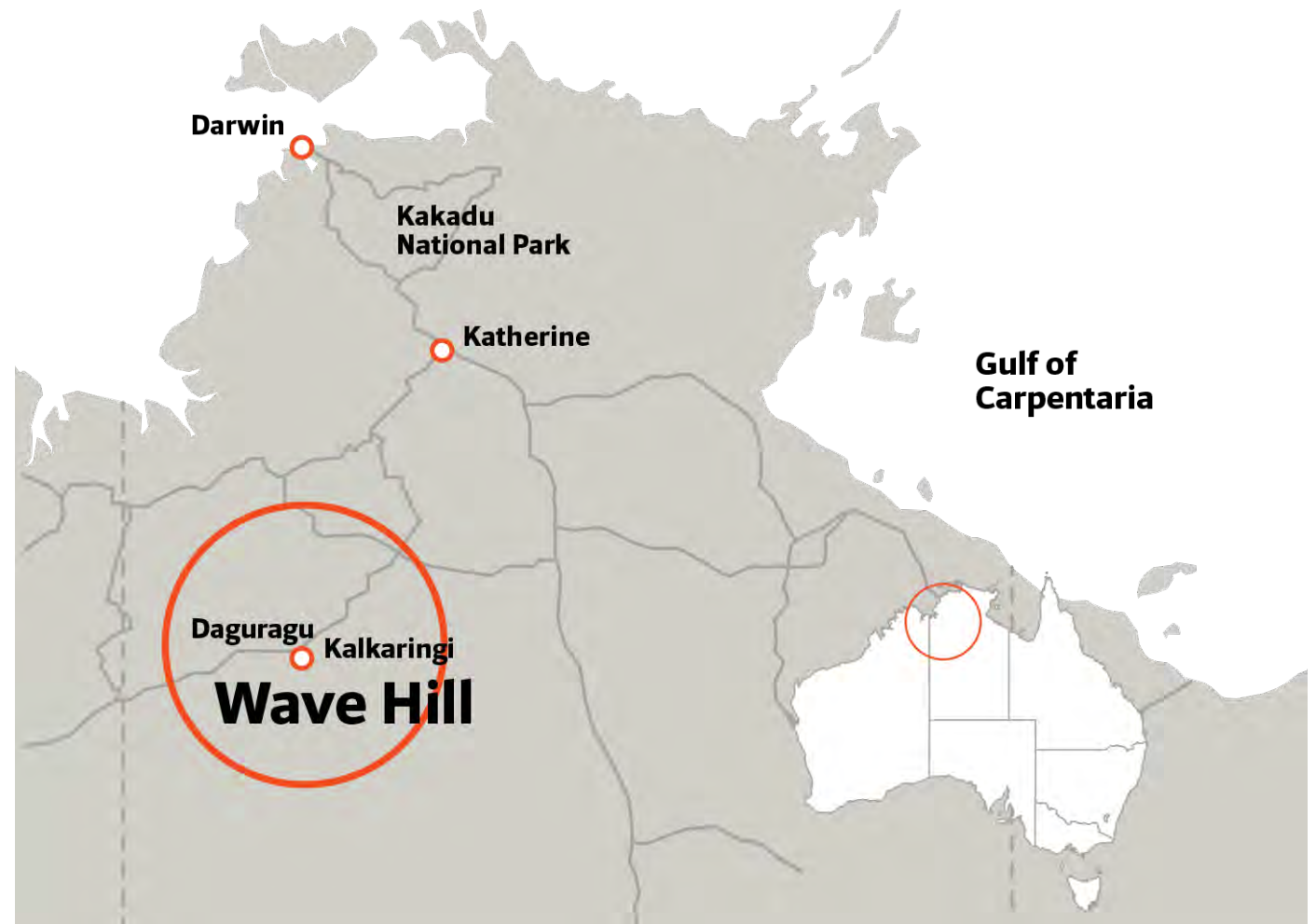
“200 Aborigines walk off N.T property”

- Want pay increased to \$50 per week.

“the Wave Hill strike began without the knowledge of the North Australia Workers Union but was precipitated by its Aboriginal organizer, Dexter Daniels, who visited the station last weekend” (SMH)

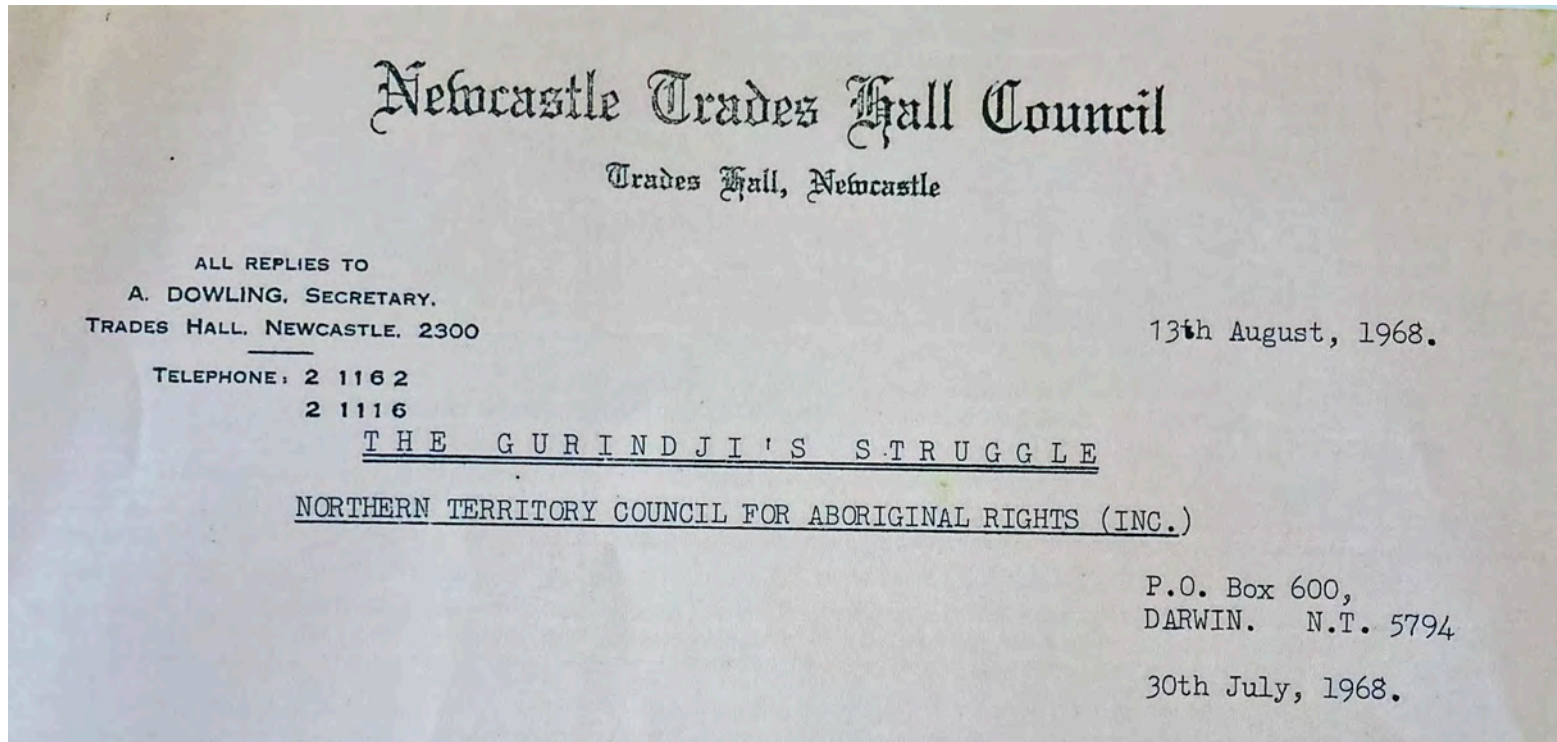
Support provided by NT Council of Aboriginal Rights and NAWU enabled 80 workers and 120 dependents to walk off.

Defining point in the struggle for Land Rights- capturing National attention.



# 1968: MOBILIZING SUPPORT OF THE UNIONS

- Returned south to enlist the support of the Unions.



# 1968: AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DECISION NOT TO GRANT LAND AT WATTIE CREEK TO THE GURINDJI PEOPLE

Union response:

“All forms of protest, including meetings and letters to parliament are needed now. Funds are urgently required to feed Gurindjis at Wattie Creek”

1969: Newcastle Trades Hall, Aboriginal Advancement Committee: 24- hour vigil on the Post Office steps in support of land rights.

# 1970:BOYCOTT OF VESTEY'S PRODUCTS



## regain their land

### BOYCOTT VESTEYS

**What you can do**

- Join with others to stage the above form of supermarket protest.
- Memorise the Vestey products (see page 5), and take a black-marker to the supermarkets to mark Vestey foods with a black stroke.
- Stencil "boycott Vestey goods" outside shops.
- Telephone managers of all local supermarkets and big foodstores and ask them to drop Vestey lines from their shelves. Publicise those that refuse.
- Advise all your friends to join the boycott and have a local meeting to discuss ways to conduct it.
- Telephone or write to the office of Anglia or other Vestey subsidiary in your State, demanding release of the Gurindji land at Wave Hill station.

GO-SLOW and other forms of industrial action against Vestey units like Blue Star ships, A.C.T. & Trans-Ocean Containers, consignments to and from Vestey station properties, meatworks, seafood works, etc.

DEMONSTRATIONS, telephone calls, letters, directed to any suitable Vestey company premises.

### LIFE UNDER VESTEYS



LORD VESTEY

"WE have," said the third Baron Vestey in an interview two years ago, "no reason to feel guilty about our record with the Aborigines".

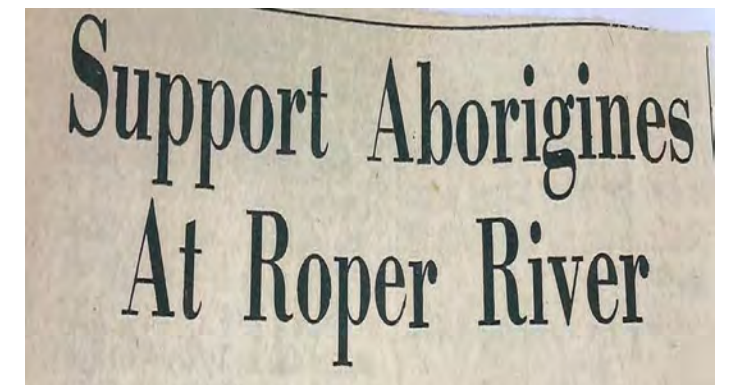
5,500 Aborigines were wage earners in the N.T. in 1966. 1,300 were employed as station hands of some sort on the pastoral stations — and by far the biggest employer is Vestey's. The Aborigines have provided an almost unbelievably cheap labour force in the Territory. A damn sight cheaper than the blacks in South Africa. Until 1967, Aboriginal stockmen were paid 5s. a week plus keep, which consisted mainly of salt beef, bread, jam, tea, sugar, some clothing, and some tobacco. In 1967, the weekly wage for an adult Aboriginal stockman was fixed by ordinance at \$4.35 with keep. Two years later at \$1.50 clothing allowance was kicked in, making a total which was less than 1/5 of that of a white stockman. After the 1966 strike at Wave Hill, the courts declared that Aboriginal stockmen should receive award wages, but that to do so, they would have to become members of the N.A.W.U. Few, if any, Aboriginal stockmen are members of the N.A.W.U. whose secretary says virtually that the task of signing up new members is too big for the union. Consequently employers need only pay them the minimum wage of \$25 per week as opposed to \$32 award. Whites generally receive above the award — \$40 to \$50 per week. The trick though is to collect even that, apart from being robbed at company stores they frequently aren't even paid the minimum wage.

## ROPER RIVER STRIKE 1970

- “Aboriginal people on strike for Land”
- 9<sup>th</sup> March 1970, 400 people, including children withdrew their labour.

“What we want is the right to control fully our own land, with no-one to tell us what to do with it”  
(Tribune 1970).

21/4/70 Dexter in Newcastle addresses Trades Hall.



# 1971: GRANTING OF THE YUGAL CATTLE LEASE

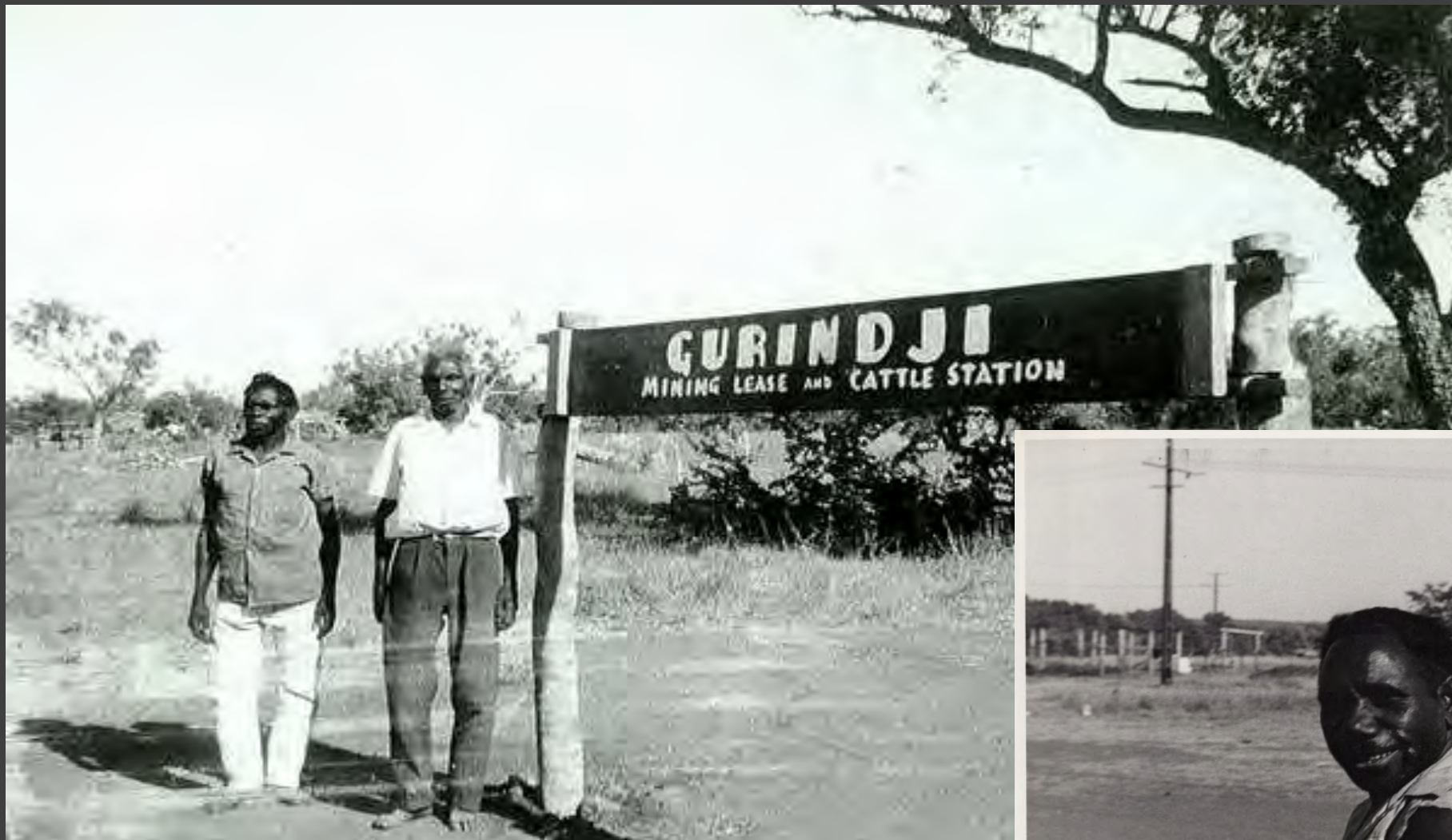
- Northern Territory Land Board made its first recommendation for the granting of a pastoral lease to an Aboriginal cattle company.
- Yugal cattle Company: lease of 1.5 million acres at Roper River.

MAY DAY  
SYDNEY 1971:

4000 TRADE  
UNIONISTS  
& STUDENTS







*Dexter Daniels*

.....  
DEXTER DANIELS , SECRET  
ROPER RIVER CITIZENS COU