removing the royal coat of arms. It is still in the assembly chamber, a colorful joke in a place to which royalty may not be admitted and in which royalty has no power. Meanwhile, the council converted its iron prefabricated into what looks like a rather splendid funeral parlor decked out in cedar and red leather.

The mother of Australian parliaments continued to spread backwards and sideways as needs dictated, covering its current site of four acres with a monument to the ingenuity of local handymen, a labyrinthine muddle of fibre, weatherboard and corrugated iron infested by rust, dry rot and white ants. The backblock behind the three original buildings is an area of almost total squalor.

The hazards of day-to-day existence there seem to outweigh the sense of history that the old place exudes as far as the inmates are concerned. From time to time the banister leading down from the dining room towards the assembly chamber has been known to collapse under the weight of an Hon. Member with disastrous results; flea plagues infest the library; officers that were once livelies give off the unmistakable aromas of the past; and there were, of course, those unforgettable days when the front balcony collapsed, the dining room ceiling caved in and the south wall of the council chamber fell out.

The first stage of the current plan, as far as can be determined, is to wipe out the squalor of the backblock and build a six-storey office block in which parliamentarians may be individually housed instead of being packed two or three to a room

Boost for black

"While I remain prime minister, the interests of my people, the Aborigines, are of paramount concern." Prime Minister McMahon in Adelaide last week.

"My government, ever since I took office, has conscientiously legislated to alleviate the lot of the Aborigines." The prime minister in "McCabe P.M." moments before he is assassinated by an Aborigine.

ABORIGINES throughout Australia have found common cause in the federal government's removal of the Aboriginal embassy from the lawns of Parliament House.

As recent as February, Ralph Hunt, minister for the interior, proclaimed that "the protagonists of land claims for Aborigines are frequently neither Aboriginal nor non-Aboriginal.

It was part truth then and the newspaper headlines since the setting up of the Aboriginal embassy more than six months ago, and more dramatically in the past few weeks, have given it the lie.

The June land rights decision and police action to destroy the embassy have now made the struggle for land rights, symbolically enacted in Canberra, predominantly Aboriginal. Representatives of nearly all Aboriginal communities are saying that the closing of the embassy was a decisive turning point; and that the government, in unwittingly escalating the struggle for land rights, has united the community more effectively than any of the efforts of any single Aboriginal organisation.

FAITH BANDLER, secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, has for 16 years fought publicly for Aboriginal rights. She says that the government has now put the kettle on to boil. "It's the beginning of a
unity

By ELISABETH WYNHAUSEN

strong and united front... When we have people like Senator Bonner and Reg Saunders from the Office of Aboriginal Affairs taking a stand on the question of land rights, I think it's an indication to the more conservative blacks that they've got to get with it, and to the radical blacks that they've got to be disciplined.

Mrs Bandler is certain that the government action against the embassy is the greatest turning point she has witnessed while involved in Aboriginal affairs. An associate of Faith Bandler has suggested that her attitude towards the federal government hardened into total animosity after a trip to the Northern Territory to see the conditions in which Aborigines live. Mrs Bandler was not surprised by the Commonwealth police's action last month. But she feels it shocked many other Aborigines into unity. "It's brought everybody together and strengthened the ties between the black people. Now most of them are strongly and violently anti-McMahon. We've never been involved in party politics before but we've no alternative. Getting rid of the McMahon government is the goal for everyone now -- it's a priority even over land rights."

first Sunday were many who had not been involved in the struggle for land rights before. "They came from all sections of the community, in bussesloads from Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. Even the blacks who have just been sitting out in their suburbs trying to make good came."

She tells of the experience of one woman, suggesting that it is typical. "Shirley Smith, who works for the Aboriginal Medical Service in Sydney, came. She saw the police and begged the kids to move away. 'It's just not worth the blood on the grass,' she said. But when the police moved in she was involved. She'll go back fighting... She won't call for peace.

Shirley Smith, who has spent most of her life fostering Aboriginal children and has never been involved in politics before, says, "I stood there and told my people not to use violence. But when those police officers marched in to fight them young kids, it was different. All the people did was circle around a lousy tent. But I saw my nephew getting kicked and I saw a young girl drop-kicked and she went into hospital. That's why I changed. I'm not a politician... but I know what's right and wrong. I know what went on on Sunday was all wrong."

BOBBI SYKES is young, Afrod and fiery. Comparisons sometimes made with Angela Davis are too slick but she is the predominant spokeswoman for the young turks of the movement, who for four years now have been talking violence -- if so far, only talking.

Bobbi Sykes was arrested the day the Aboriginal embassy came down. She went back to Canberra the next Sunday when police forestalled an attempt to resurrect the embassy. She says that among the people who came on that

TOM WILLIAMS worked for a petrol company for 20 years, and then, in a move that still surprises him, joined the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in Sydney. The foundation, criticised for its conservatism by most sections of the Aboriginal community, is supported by government funds. Tom Williams is concerned to stress that he speaks as an individual, not as publicity officer for the foundation. In the political spectrum of the Aboriginal community, he is a conservative, but his conservation is laced with outrage now.

"I think a united front is more likely now. The Aboriginal embassy made it more likely. The people who weren't involved in the embassy are concerned about police brutality, and more importantly, with the question of who gave the police their orders. Williams believes that Aborigines should work within the system. But acknowledges that the major Aboriginal organisations are sympathetic to what the radicals are doing.

JOHN NEWFONG, a journalist, left Sydney to live at the Aboriginal embassy for five months. A few weeks before the embassy fell, Newfong returned to Sydney to edit "Identity," an Aboriginal magazine established last year.

Newfong says there has always been unity on the land rights question but that the attack on the embassy made Aborigines "stand up and be counted" in a way that had never happened before. "More than anything else, it was a further blow to the dignity of the Aboriginal people. It was almost like a symbol of what's happened in every country town. It's a situation with which blacks all over Australia can identify. They've seen this sort of thing happening every time the cops in country towns move in and push Aborigines off campsites and further out into fringe dwelling communities.

He believes that the real impact of the government's action will rebound from the reserves, and says that the Aboriginal rights organisations are stepping up their mobilisations of the people in reserves and the outback.

"If we think in terms of political strategies it's in the outback that our real strength lies. The gerrymandering that has gone on to favor the Country Party favors the Aboriginal vote even more."