No walkabout

THE ABORIGINAL demonstrators outside Canberra’s Parliament House, it appears, are now planning to stay at least until the election and in all probability the Government won’t do anything to force them to leave.

Some weeks ago Interior Minister Ralph Hunt fielded a question from John Gorton on the Aboriginals. Hunt in doing so complimented the Aborigines on their good behavior, cleanliness and co-operation but added that he thought the Government would have to look at an ordinance to prevent the lawn from becoming a permanent camping ground.

Recently David Solomon in the “Canberra Times” wrote that the Government was preparing an ordinance which would give it power to move the Aboriginal “embassy.” No one would confirm the story officially but it was not denied.

The Aborigines, more forthcoming, said they would not recognise any law aimed at moving them and were prepared to use violence to stay. Now it seems that the attitude of the Aborigines and sympathy for them have caused the Government to shelve its plans. It may now be prepared to wait until the Aborigines fold up their tents and leave, which they have no present intention of doing. And Mr Gorton and several other Government members are none the happier.

The road show

INWARD MAIL: “Our beloved Guru is returning, the devotees in Sydney number over 30 plus families, similar number in Melbourne. Here we have many projects, the fitting out of a double-decker bus to be Australia’s first travelling temple and road shop, an Indian shop next to the temple and a new printing press. So how about another article?”

Mohanananda Das of the centre for Krishna Consciousness — the headquarters of the Hare Krishna movement — is full of news when we follow up his notes. Yes, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, founder of the movement, is to return to Australia next month.

“Prabhupada will be here for two weeks,” Mohanananda Das says. “He will arrive from Bombay where our first city — the Hare Krishna City — is being built on one of the most plush and desirable pieces of property. He will then go on to Hong Kong, Tokyo and Honolulu before returning to Los Angeles which is, like, the headquarters of the movement at this time.”

And after the swami’s departure? “The next big thing is a Hare Krishna rock opera,” Mohanananda Das says. “We’ve got the greatest talent in Australia behind us and we’ve got a lot of talent among the devotees, too — musicians, singers, dancers. It’s going to be the most fantastic show that’s ever hit Australia.”

Mohanananda Das promises that the rock opera will include amplified guitars and the rest of the apparencies of the idiom. The devotees are busy learning all the songs already, he says, “and we should be ready to go, go, by next spring.” (Eat your heart out, Harry Miller.)

The bus is a great success, too, Mohanananda Das says. “One policeman loved it. He told us: ‘Okay you kids, everyone’s all right. But you’ll have to keep inside the bus and I think the City Council might object to your throwing flowers into the street.’ But he was very nice. He was just a beautiful gentleman.”

So relations with the police have improved at last, have they? “Not really, They arrested six of us yesterday. They didn’t ask us to leave. They didn’t say anything to us at all. They just moved in and arrested us. There’s one of them in particular who seems to have it in for us. And they’ve never been successful in court: we’ve been arrested on about 30 occasions and every time a case comes up it is thrown out of court. Every time! And they keep arresting us.”

“I’ve pleaded with them about these arrests,” Mohanananda Das says. “I went to a police sergeant and pleaded with him about these arrests. I said that all we were trying to do was help young people. And he said we’d been making too much noise. That was in Kings Cross, where the noise from the bars and nightclubs is so much that you can hardly hear.”

The Krishna people have not been discouraged by this harassment. The number of devotees in Australia has increased threefold (to 60) since October and next month, after the swami’s visit to Sydney, branches of the movement will be established in Auckland and Brisbane. “We’ll go on because we know that things will work out in the end,” Mohanananda Das says.

Lucky chance

CANBERRA, after years of dependence on interstate lotteries, now has one of its own, quite an achievement in a city whose inhabitants still have to troop over the border to play poker machines. Interior Minister Ralph Hunt not only gave his approval for the lottery and intimated that more could be held if the first was successful, he also bought the first ticket.

Ticket sales are going well, with some 3500 of the 25,000 tickets sold in the first few days. But they are pricey. In Canberra a $1 ticket gets you a first prize of only $6000 against $1 for $12,000 in New South Wales. But the organisers claim that the odds of 18 to