

Brian Manning cited in the NT MUA branch news November 2011.
His full speech and poem cited earlier here
<http://chriswhiteonline.org/2011/09/2003/>

“I took the photograph on the morning after I arrived in the Gurindji’s Camp in the dry bed of the Victoria River in August 1966.

With the first load of food supplies to sustain the Strikers in their struggle which was to last for 9 years before their claim for return of their Lands was to be recognised.

In 1975, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, with an iconic gesture, poured a handful of Gurindji soil into the hand of Vincent Lingiari as a symbol of return of the land.

This year 2011, on the 45th Anniversary of the Walk-Off, the people celebrated “Gurindji Freedom Day” with the Inaugural ‘Gurindji Freedom Day Commemorative Lectures’ delivered at Daguragu by speakers with family links to Gurindji, Malgnin, Mudpurra, Kungarakan peoples; Dr Sue Stanton and Josie Crowshaw.

I was privileged to speak on this landmark occasion and drew attention to the solidarity of the Australian Trade Union Movement’s ongoing support from the outset.

Maritime Workers in Darwin maintained a continuing food supply using my 30cwt Bedford truck which has recently been Heritage listed as an object of historical significance, coinciding with the 45th anniversary.

With MUA assistance I travelled with fellow retired Darwin wharfie, Jack Phillips who also played a significant role supporting the Strikers after the walk-off.

Aboriginal people in remote communities are facing another era of discriminatory laws with the imposition of the Intervention 4 years ago by John Howard and continued by the Gillard Government.

The introduction of the basics card as a forced money management scheme has been imposed arbitrarily on ALL Aborigines regardless of their ability or otherwise to manage their finances.

Additionally, the N.T. Government has decided as one of its budget savings exercises, sacked ALL Remote Councils where the people were managing their communities and installed a ‘shire’ hub system, withdrawing funding from ‘outstations’.

This has set back the Gurindji community development about 5 years.

The discussions during symposiums were spirited against the Governments and the people are once again calling for another ‘walk-off’ to express their frustrations at what amounts to Social engineering and a return to the old assimilation policies of the past.

There is no doubt, the Gurindji has formed a close association with the Australian Union Movement and I am quite sure they will not hesitate to again call on the Unions for solidarity in their ongoing struggle to run their own lives.”

Brian Manning