

# Natives boycott 'window-dressing'



MR JOHN NEWFONG

"Aboriginals are, we feel, simply being used as a bit of window-dressing for the Cook bicentenary celebrations," Mr John Newfong said with quiet conviction.

"Aboriginal involvement in the celebrations means representation in the usual way — hostile blacks on the one hand, beauty queens and boxers on the other," he said.

Mr Newfong is the newly appointed general secretary of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

He was explaining in his office in Sydney why Aboriginals were boycotting the bi-centenary celebrations.

"We feel we could have participated in these celebrations if we had been given a much healthier representation — but we have in fact been pretty well left out of the whole issue," he said.

By JEREMY WEBB

"But in any case, how can we celebrate when we are the only indigenous people in the world without legal right or ownership of our reserves and tribal lands?"

Land rights, he emphasised, was the central issue involved in the boycott.

Mr Newfong said the Queen was not one of the objects of the protest, although there were plans to present her with a petition setting out Aboriginals' grievances.

He wasn't sure how, because none of the council members had received invitations to functions where they could meet the Queen.

Mr Newfong, 26, was elected general secretary last week, after heated debate in the

council's annual conference in Canberra over whether non-Aboriginals should be barred from holding executive posts.

Although the council decided against such a move, Mr Newfong was elected in place of the non-Aboriginal secretary, Mr Jack Horner.

Mr Newfong is not strictly Aboriginal either — his father is part Polynesian, part Aboriginal and his mother is of Scottish descent.

Mr Horner was in the office yesterday also, discussing plans for the boycott with Mr Newfong and the council's vice-president, Mrs Faith Bandler.

Mr Newfong, looking wearied by his efforts in organising what promises to be an Australia-wide protest, summed up the situation by saying that apart from window-dressing, Aboriginals had not been invited to fully participate in the celebrations, nor did they want to