

Government accused of apartheid

Aborigines were being brainwashed into believing they must live separately from the Australian community, Aboriginal Senator Bonner (Lib, Qld) said last night.

Speaking in the adjournment debate in the Senate, Senator Bonner described the Government's plans for a national Aboriginal consultative committee as "a kind of auto-apartheid".

"Aborigines have been told to believe that this is going to be a separate Aboriginal Parliament", he said.

"This is going to divide Aborigines not only among themselves but also from the rest of the Australian community.

"I would like to give warning that this is going to cause trouble in the Aboriginal community".

Senator Bonner said that only about 30,000 or 40,000 Aborigines out of



Senator Bonner

162,000 had enrolled for the NACC elections.

"Many of them will not enrol", he said. "They do not want a separate Aboriginal Parliament.

"We've got six weeks to have the whole thing organised and electors enrolled when it takes months and months to organise a Commonwealth election.

"Even if I agreed with it, this, itself, would make a mockery of the whole idea".

The consultative committee was a farce and would be detrimental to the advancement of Aborigines.

It would not enable true consultation with the Aboriginal people but would only result in the establishment of an Aboriginal bureaucracy, not representative of the Aboriginal people.

Senator Keffe (Lab, Qld) said he did not believe Senator Bonner really believed the things he had said.

"Aboriginal and island people in this country have been asking for many years for a voice in the council of Government", Senator Keffe said. "This is the first real attempt to give them one".

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Senator Cavanagh, said that after talks with Aboriginal people he had decided to go ahead with the NACC election.