

Official storms from talks

From our Canberra Bureau

CANBERRA — The permanent head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Dexter) yesterday stormed from a meeting with the "Aboriginal Parliament."



Mr. Dexter

The incident followed an exchange between Mr. Dexter and the chairman of the Aboriginal Consultative Committee (Mr. E. Bennell).

The nine executive officers of the committee and Mr. Bennell had gone to see Mr. Dexter about the Charles Perkins issue.

On Monday Mr. Perkins, who is an assistant secretary of the department, said in Perth that the Liberal and Country parties were the "biggest racist parties" the world had seen.

Mr. Bennell said last night he told Mr. Dexter that the Government should abide by its policies.

Mr. Bennell then said: "I

put it to you, Mr. Dexter, that the ALP platform is to you and the Government what the Bible is to the Christian."

At that point Mr. Dexter leapt to his feet and left.

As he left Mr. Dexter is understood to have said: "I am not prepared to discuss the matter in this way."

Later Mr. Dexter told the Press he had been offended and had left.

Three hours later Mr. Dexter received a note from the executive asking him to meet again.

It is believed that the executive apologised to Mr. Dexter about the incident.

But Mr. Bennell refused to attend the second meeting.

"I felt in no way that I offended him by my statement," he said.

"Therefore there was no need to apologise."

The senior spokesman for the executive, Mr. B. McGuinness, told the Press that the officers had agreed to take collective responsibility for the incident.

Mr. McGuinness said the

lam) had "brushed the executive off" by not meeting them yesterday or on Thursday.

He said the meeting had been arranged following a request to Mr. Whitlam by letter last week.

But Mr. Whitlam's staff had called it off.

A Government official said yesterday it had been impossible to fit the meeting into Mr. Whitlam's tight schedule.

The Attorney-General's Department is examining Mr. Perkins's remarks to see if there was a breach of Public Service rules.

Mr. McGuinness said a protest against the Government's attitude towards Aborigines was planned for Thursday outside Parliament House, when the Queen would open the session.

He said he expected 1,000 people to attend.