

Govt faces 'grilling' over gun

Start today to probe of Blacks' finances

CANBERRA. — The Parliament public accounts committee today begins its inquiry into the financial administration of the Aboriginal Affairs Department.

The chairman of the all-party committee, Senator McAuliffe (Lab., Qld.) said the committee would discuss whether it should ask Parliament to allow it to meet during parliamentary sitting hours.

Senator McAuliffe said this might be necessary because of the urgency of the inquiry.

The committee will have before it the special report prepared by the Auditor-General (Mr. Steele Craik), tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, in which he strongly criticised the department for its serious and extensive financial mismanagement.

Today's meeting — which will be private — will decide on the way the inquiry will be conducted.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Snedden) yesterday accused the Government of trying to shift responsibility for its financial blunders in Aboriginal affairs on to the Public Service.

Mr. Snedden said the Government was in particular trying to put the blame on to the department's head, Mr. Barrie Dexter.

"This is to be deplored," Mr. Snedden said.

Tariff cuts to go ahead

CANBERRA.—The Government has decided not to accept the recommendations of the Tariff Board to defer for two years duty reductions on domestic appliances, such as heating and cooling equipment.

The Minister representing the Minister for Customs and Excise, Dr. Jim Cairns, said the Government would phase in the reductions over the two years.

This would begin with an immediate reduction, with further reductions in 12 months and two years.

The Tariff Board recommended a duty rate of 25 per cent. for most of the goods

CANBERRA.—The Government was closely questioned in both the House of Representatives and the Senate yesterday over the Aboriginal Affairs Department "gun incident."

In Canberra Court last Friday, an Aborigine, Robert McLeod, 26, pleaded guilty to a charge of carrying an unlicensed pistol, and was fined \$40 and given a 12-month good-behavior bond.

The charge followed an incident at the department's office the previous day.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Whitlam) told the House of Representatives he did not know if a solicitor had broken the law over the incident and the court case.

Mr. Hunt (CP NSW) asked if a Mr. Hausman was in the office of Mr. Frank Moy at the Department of Aboriginal Affairs when the pistol was allegedly unloaded.

"Was Mr. Hausman a member of the legal profession," Mr. Hunt asked.

"Did he ensure that the correct facts were given to the court?"

Mr. Whitlam said he did not know of the "learned gentleman," and any breach was a matter for investigation.

Mr. Whitlam said he first heard of the incident on Thursday afternoon during a reception for the Queen.

He had told the Attorney General (Senator Murphy) that the main consideration should be the saving of life.

The leader of the country party (Mr. Anthony) asked if Mr. Whitlam was told that the gun was loaded.

"If so, why was the information held from the A.C.T. police and



Mr. Anthony

the court?" Mr. Anthony asked.

Mr. Whitlam said he had no written or oral report on the matter.

Mr. Whitlam told Mr. Anthony there may have been a miscarriage of justice or a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, but inquiries were in hand to investigate the matter.

In the Senate, Senator Murphy told Senator Condon Byrne (DLP, QLD.) that, depending on the results of an official inquiry, he would give a full report to the Senate.

However, if charges were to be laid, it would be undesirable to bring details to the Senate.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Senator Cavanagh) said the permanent head of his department, Mr. Barrie Dexter, and the acting director, Mr. Moy had discussed the possibility of an Aboriginal sit-in last Thursday morning.

"But they decided not to seek police protection because it would have an upsetting effect on the staff," he said.

"They had always been able to reason with the Aborigines."

He said that to the best of his knowledge no statement in writing was made by a member of his department and handed to police after the incident.

Members of the department who attended the demonstration last Thursday outside Parliament House had been using up part of their accrued leave, Senator Cavanagh told Senator Maunsell (CP, QLD.).

He believed 96 officers attended the demonstration.

The leave taken was approved by Mr. Dexter and, because it was accrued leave, the officers had been paid.